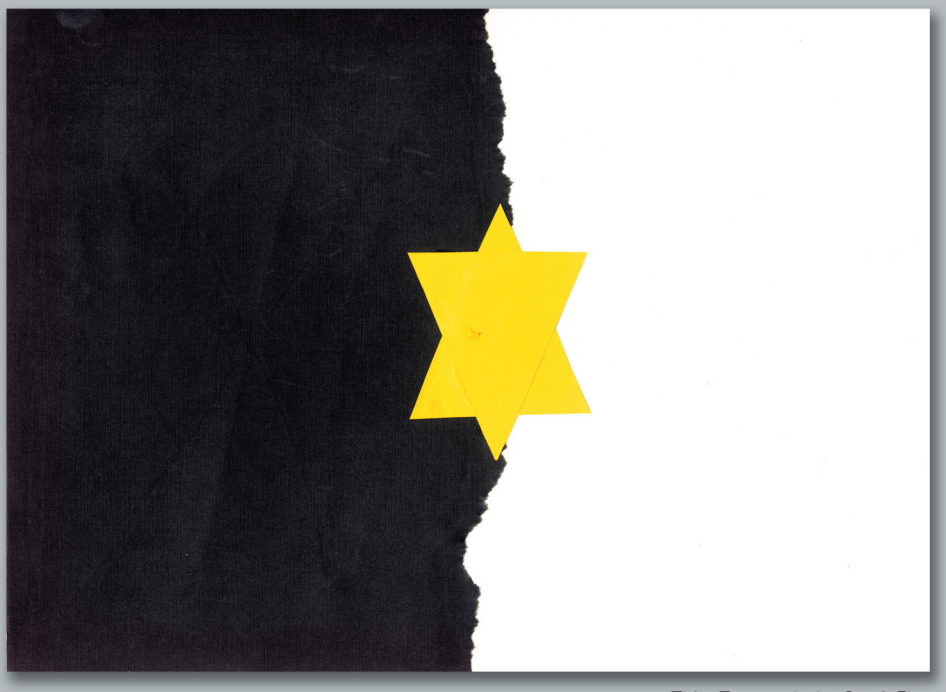
California Holocaust Memorial Week

April 19 - 23, 2004



Title: Torn • Artist: Jacob Fine

Assemblywoman Rebecca Cohn

24th Assembly District

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April 19, 2004

Dear Friend:

I am proud to present a unique project from the 24th Assembly District in honor of 2004 California Holocaust Memorial Week. Please take a few moments to review and reflect upon the true-life stories that make up this booklet.

Last year, I asked Holocaust survivors in my District to offer written or oral accounts of their experiences. Their narratives were recorded and compiled to serve both as a reminder and an archive for future generations. I am proud to say that this year, we have doubled the number of survivor stories documented.

I commend the several high school student volunteers from my District who devoted their time to this year's project. Through their efforts, we have taken another step in preserving the increasingly rare accounts from this period of time.

As an Assemblymember, I feel it is one of my duties to ensure that the tragedies of the Holocaust are never forgotten, so that they may never be repeated.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Cohn

Rebecca Cohn
Assemblymember, 24th District

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Third Person Accounts

Alexander Galbert

Alexander Galbert was born in 1925 in Minsk, Belarussia. His mother Haya Libo, born in 1896, and father, Yefim Galbert, born in 1888, were both also from Minsk. His family consisted of his parents and his older brother, Michael Galbert. His father, Yefim, was a factory worker, and his mother was a housewife. In his city, just like the rest of the former Soviet Union, the communists ordered that all synagogues and Hebrew schools be shut down. Because of this they didn't have the chance to observe holidays, learn the Hebrew language, or study Judaism.

Alexander attended school. On June 21, 1941, listening to the radio everybody heard about the commencement of the war. He was only 15 years old. On June 22, 23, and 24 Germany had started the air bombing of Minsk. The residents of Minsk tried running from the bombings. The Galbert family ran toward the west, which was unsuccessful. So they tried running toward the east, but they were escorted back to their city by German soldiers who occupied Minsk on June 28, 1941.

On the same day Alexander first saw a German soldier. The figure is still vivid in his mind, as if it happened yesterday. With German soldiers taking over the city, the Jews began noticing all the commands that soldiers were giving them. The first command was that all men ages 15-45 years of age register at German offices. In the beginning of July, Germans began to break into Jewish homes and grab the first Jewish man they saw, and drive him away. On July 8, 1941 they heard that Germans were going to shoot the first 100 Jews. Since that time pogroms (random shootings) became a part of their daily lives. In one of these situations Alexander lost his two uncles. The Germans took them away and Alexander never saw them again.

At the same time, Germans were setting up concentration camps around the city. The first one was in the village of Drozdi. In the middle of July, the first ghetto, known as the Minsk Ghetto, was set up. Within five days all the remaining Jews were forced to leave their homes and settle into the ghetto. In the ghetto the Germans continued to take away Jews and shoot them. During this time Alexander's father was taken away and Alexander never saw him again. In the ghetto the Jews had to wear yellow armbands. Food was scarce. With the sparse rations they were fed, they were forced to search in garbage cans for any remaining food.

The Germans commenced a pogrom on every communist holiday. Germans began to remove children to labor camps, and during the next pogrom, Alexander's mother hid him and three other relatives in an underground shelter. She did this because Alexander was already 16 at this point, and he was forced to go to work. This was dangerous because he could have been shot at any given moment. Sitting in this underground shelter, they heard the Germans take away the members of their family one by one. That was the last that he saw of his mother. Later, that evening when it was dark they heard a familiar voice saying

"whoever is alive come out," and Alexander and his brother saw their cousin Leon. The Germans were looking for men who knew how to work with electricity, so Alexander and his brother went to work at an electricity station.

Alexander's older brother Michael became sick and in March 1942 he passed away. Out of a family of 22 people Alexander was all alone. In May of 1942 Alexander was put into a labor camp called Bolshoy Trostyanets and he worked unloading sand. At the end of the summer of 1943 all the boys including Alexander were supposed to be driven to a death camp and shot, but rain started coming down hard, and a soldier hid them in a barn. Within this barn there was a small window. During the night Alexander took off all signs on him that made it obvious he was Jewish and climbed out of this window. He managed to run back to the ghetto to his house. There he changed back into his own clothes and nobody noticed that there was a new person in town. That is how he saved his life.

Throughout Belarussia there were many partisans. Alexander decided to run from the ghetto and find a partisan group. On his way home from work he ripped off the yellow armband. For six days he sat in the soot of a closed factory. He learned that the ghetto he lived in was not open anymore because everybody that was left was driven to a death camp where they were shot. Leaving Minsk was impossible, because the city was surrounded by police officers who asked for identification, and he had none. On the seventh day Alexander was stopped by many officers who asked him many questions. He was forced to lie to them. He told them that he was a refugee from another city, and he was on his way to exchange his clothes for food. They told him that when he was returning home, he should walk through their post. But he didn't return home because he was on his way to the partisans. In this way he managed to finally reach a village where the Jewish partisan group came to get food.

Alexander met a partisan and became part of his group. From August 1943 he lived and fought with these partisans and one day, in 1944, when the war was almost over, the partisan group made it to Minsk. He returned to his old home and began his new life.

In 1950 Alexander finished university and got married. He, his wife and two sons moved to America in 1994. Alexander is a senior citizen. He lives with his wife and during his free time he writes books about his memories of World War II. These memories are still a heartache to him.

Alexander was the only survivor who actually cried during his interview with me, which made me feel horrible that I was putting him through all this pain all over again, which made me want to cry with him.

By Maryana Smolyanitsky

Alexander Mogilivar

Alexander Mogilivar was born in 1930 in the village of Ratendorf, in Ukraine. His mother, Doba, worked on a farm milking cows, and Zahar, his father, was a deliveryman. His brother Yosef was born in 1934, and his sister Fenya was born 1937. In 1939 the family moved to live with his grandmother in Tulchin.

In 1941 the war began, and nobody was ready for it. The army recruited his father. They attempted to evacuate but managed to only get as far as the city of Talnoye as the Germans had already occupied everywhere else. The family lived in a run-down apartment. Two weeks later there was an announcement for all Jews in the city to register. After the registration the German soldiers gathered all the Jews in a church and, under heavy security, escorted them toward the city of Uman. On the way there, they were led onto a field and at random, people were shot right in front of everybody. During one of the shootings Alexander fell to the ground, and crawled on his stomach to a haystack. After all the shootings only five members of his family remained alive, and they started making their way back to the city of Tulchin. They walked for two months, and took residence at Alexander's uncle's house, in Tulchin. The Germans divided Ukraine into two parts. One territory was under the Romanians, and the other was under the Germans. Tulchin was under the Romanian army.

In September 1941, a ghetto was organized and the Nazis forced the Jews to live there. Life in the ghetto was cold, and food was scarce. Alexander was always afraid and thought constantly of food. In December the Germans gathered all the Jews, and in rows they marched, not knowing where they were going. Soon they realized that they had entered a concentration camp known as Mertvaya Petlya, which was guarded by the Romanian army. Alexander and the remaining five people in his family had to live in tents and exchange food for clothing.

In August 1942, the Germans came to this camp and picked out people who were still able to work. Prisoners who could work were separated from those who couldn't. Women who had babies but were able to work had their children taken away from them. Nobody was ever shot in this camp because the prisoners were dying by themselves from disease or starvation. Jews died by the thousands. Of the five members of Alexander's family who were sent there, only three survived. Alexander's uncle and his great-aunt died. Alexander, his aunt and his cousin remained.

Alexander felt compelled to help his aunt and cousin because they were going to die of

starvation, so he escaped from the camp to the city of Tomashpol. He was caught, and he was sent to the city of Balta, where he was interrogated. Under interrogation he made up a story about himself and was sent to the city of Bershad, where he lived in a Jewish Children's Home. He worked at a food warehouse, which was behind the ghetto territory. He lived there until March 1944 when the city was liberated. One of the Soviet army soldiers took Alexander with them and until the end of the war he served as a mailman for the army.

After the war Alexander lived in Vinitsa in Ukraine. There he married and had two children, a son, Dmitry, and a daughter, Zoya. In 1996 he moved to the United States.
Alexander is a very interesting man, and he is a great person to interview. He gave me the exact answers that I needed. I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to work with this man.

By Maryana Smolyanitsky

Charles Stevens

Charles Stevens (originally Silberman) was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1936. His parents emigrated from Poland some years before. They spoke Yiddish and French at home. The Jewish community in Brussels during this time was fairly large, however, there were no Jewish neighborhoods. Charles's parents were non-observant, although his grandparents were more so.

In May 1940, when Belgium fell to the Germans, Charles's parents realized that they needed to hide, and leave Belgium, so they joined the long lines of refugees hoping to escape to England by way of Dunkirk, France, but they were returned to France. In April 1942, when Charles was 5 ½, his parents placed him and his younger sister Lili into a Protestant orphanage. They felt that the family's chances for survival would be better if separated. Charles's mother visited sometimes but it was too dangerous to do so very often. She brought him and his sister Lili chocolates and treats, until she was advised not to do so, because the other children beat up Charles for them.

In March of 1943, the children were moved to a convent, for security reasons, where they spent several years. Charles did not know that he was Jewish; it was felt that it was safer if he was not aware of it. No one tried to convert him; in fact he felt left out when he did not receive communion. Since it was wartime, there were shortages of food, clothing, and medical care, hygienic conditions were poor, and the food was sometimes contaminated with worms. During the winter, kids got frostbite, and their scalps were often bloody from lice. Charles rarely saw his sister; boys and girls were separated at the convent.

Right after liberation, when Charles was 8 years old, his last name was changed back to Silberman. In September 1945, he and his sister were placed in a Jewish orphanage in Lasne, Belgium, and stayed for almost a year. He had come full circle as far as religion went. He had started as a Jew, was a Protestant and then a Catholic during the war, and was now Jewish again. With the war over, the orphanage was not a bad place. Exotic foods like oranges and bananas were available. He remembers singing Hebrew songs around a campfire and other pleasant childhood activities. The children were being prepared to be moved to Israel. Except for Charles and Lili, all the children in the orphanage had lost their families in the Holocaust. Being told that he had parents in America, made him feel very fortunate. Charles was not aware that his parents were in a refugee camp with no money and no home.

While the kids were being moved around, Charles's parents were constantly on the run,

and the Nazis were getting closer and closer to them all the time. They continued their escape in more and more danger. They managed to escape to Italy, and stay in hiding until the liberation of Italy by the American forces in 1944. Charles's parents were able to go to New York with a group of Jewish refugees, where they were settled into a camp upstate in Oswego, in August 1944. They were allowed to stay in New York despite the fact that they signed papers agreeing to return to Europe after liberation. However, after liberation, they decided not to return to Europe, and eventually were allowed to stay in the U.S.

The Silbermans tried to find out what happened to Charles and Lili, and some months later found out that the kids had survived. They started making inquiries about the children, and made arrangements to have Charles and his sister brought to New York. The kids had a brief stay with cousins in Brussels, and then they were taken to Marseille where they were made to board a French ship headed for New York. When they got to New York, there was a longshoreman strike and they had to stay aboard the ship near the Statue of Liberty for several days.

In 1946, the family was reunited after a 4-½ year separation. At the reunion, Charles was almost 10 years old, and his sister Lili was 8 ½. They did not recognize their parents. Charles got along with his parents, although they were never able to be really close. His parents lost most of their relatives in the Holocaust. Charles had no grandparents, aunts, cousins or uncles left who had been from Poland. They all perished, and his parents did not wish to discuss the horrors of the war with him. Four years was a long time to be separated at that young age. They made it clear to him, and he understood after a while, that the separation was necessary to save all their lives. His sister took it harder.

The Silbermans did not have anything when they immigrated to America, and they had to start from scratch, like many other newcomers. Charles wanted nothing more than to learn English as soon as he could, so that he could become a "true" American. After he spoke a little English, he stopped speaking any other language to his parents. When his parents spoke to him in French or Yiddish, he told them he did not understand, and forced them to speak English to him. Today, he wishes, he had spoken with his parents longer in other languages, so that he could have retained those languages better.

Charles changed his last name back to Stevens when he was a teenager in college. He then attended a graduate school in Michigan, and got his PhD in engineering.

It took Mr. Stevens, (Charles) a long time to become comfortable with speaking of his past. He did not think others would be interested. He rarely mentioned his experiences to his children; he did not want them to have hang-ups based on his experiences. They learned

all the details after they grew up. In 1984, Mr. Stevens read some articles that spoke about the Oswego Refugee center. He remembered some of the people mentioned in the article from his early days in America, and that awakened his interest in his own past. He started to realize just how much good these orphanages and convents and especially Father Bruno Reynders did for children on the run during the war. He also found some pictures of himself and his sister. He visited Yad Vashem, and found the tree, which was planted at the Holocaust memorial to honor Father Bruno. These were the people who took care of him and his sister. He realized that he should speak about the past, because he was among the lucky ones. Even though he went through hard times, he survived, while millions of others were killed.

Mr. Stevens lives in Palo Alto at this time, where he has a lovely wife and home, and two children of his own. They all live close to each other, and have a very close relationship.

By Andrew Silberstein

Emery Fabri

Emery was born and grew up in Hungary, in the city of Nyiregyhaza. The city had a population of about 50,000 and was the center of a farming community. Emery's immediate family consisted of himself, his brother, who was 2 years older, and his mother and father. Both sets of grandparents lived within 50 miles of Nyiregyhaza. Emery had a large extended family; his father had 8 brothers and 2 sisters. His family, being so near to each other, kept their ties just as close.

He lived in a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews. Most of his family's friends were Jews but they always had some non-Jewish friends. Anti-Semitism was indeed present but for the most part the 3000 or so Jews were well accepted in the community. The Jewish community had developed a strong cultural life and Emery was exposed to and learned the rich Jewish history, ideology and literature in his studies.

In 1938 the Hungarian government started enforcing new restrictions on the Jews, based on the German Nurenberg Laws. They limited and then denied admission of Jews to the universities, prohibited employment in several occupations and businesses, and greatly restricted Jewish life.

Emery graduated from high school in 1940, after which, because of the restrictions on Jewish education, he learned a trade and became a certified mechanic. In 1942, as the Jewish restrictions became stronger, Emery was sent to a forced labor camp to work for the Hungarian army on the Russian front. The Hungarian army, at that time, was supporting the German army. Emery's group cut trees in the forest, built deep wells for blowing up the main roads and built new roads and military defenses in the Carpathian Mountains. The group lived under primitive conditions in the forest, received little food and worked long hours doing exhausting physical work by using hand tools only.

In March 1943, the German army occupied Hungary and established a Nazi government. The Germans sent Adolf Eichmann and their Sondercommando units to exterminate the Jews of Hungary. They put the Jews in hastily established ghettos and most of the Jews were sent in cattle cars to Auschwitz. Many Jews were saved in Budapest by the Swedish diplomat, Ralph Wallenberg.

It is a tragic event that the Hungarian Jews were transported and died so close to the end of the War. From the greater Hungarian territory, about 450,000 Jews died in Auschwitz. Another 100,000 died from the Budapest area and forced labor camps.

In December 1944, Emery escaped from the labor group when they force-marched the group to a railroad station to transport them to work in Germany. He hid in a barn during a night and stayed there for several days with the help of a farmer until the Russian army broke the German front. Emery then decided to try to walk back to his hometown. However, a few days later, he was stopped by a Russian army patrol and put in a work camp. One evening, he was able to escape from the camp and walked back to Nyiregyhaza. Unfortunately, only his brother, three uncles and four cousins returned from his big family; all the others died in Auschwitz or in the labor camps.

In 1945, Emery decided to enroll at the Technical University. He graduated and worked as an electrical engineer in Budapest. In 1956, after the brief Hungarian uprising against the communist government collapsed, he was able to escape to Austria, walking through the mountains on a dark night.

In 1957, Emery was granted permission to come to the USA. He continued his studies and worked in New York. In 1972, Emery came to San Francisco and worked there until he retired in 1992.

Emery now lives in San Jose where he and his wife, Diane, live a busy life with family, grandchildren and friends. He is glad to be part of the South Bay Holocaust Survivors Group. He also wants to remember those friends who even in the worst conditions, showed great courage and hope.

By Emery Fabri with Alex Bernstein

Eva

Eva was born in the town of Turda, which is located in Transylvania, Roumania. Her father, Ladislau, worked as an engineer in a leather factory. He later changed his name to Vasile because of the anti-Semitic atmosphere. Her mother, whose name was Aranka, was a pediatrician. She was one of the first Jewish girls to study medicine in Cluj, another town in Transylvania.

Eva's mother stopped working when Eva was born in order to stay home and take care of Eva and her 1 1/2 year older brother. The first language they spoke at home was Hungarian. Later on they spoke German. They had a German-speaking nanny named Suzi, who taught them German songs.

When Eva was young her family moved to Bucharest, the capital of Roumania. She started school there, even though she did not speak Roumanian. At first she made many mistakes in the class, but after three months, she was able to speak Roumanian fluently. Her brother Richard, (Ricky), who was one grade ahead in school, had the same experience.

Later, when she became older, Eva attended an all-girls private school. There the students learned foreign languages, such as German and French. The other subjects were taught in Roumanian. Some of the girls slept in the dorms. Many were Christian Orthodox. Eva went to the church with everybody and sang the songs, but her Jewish education from home was so strong that she never considered converting. After four years, she started taking mainstream classes such as history, science, math, and algebra, and received English and gymnastics lessons two times a week.

Jewish life in Bucharest before the war began was well developed. There were many synagogues with beautiful architecture. Many shuls were located in the neighborhood where the poorer Jewish families lived. Eva's maternal grandparents were very observant. They kept a kosher kitchen. Her grandfather prayed everyday and went to the synagogue on Shabbat. While her parents were not religious they had deep respect for their parents' faith. The relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the city of Bucharest was based on a personal connection, but the friendship of the non-Jews was not always sincere.

Eva's mother returned to work in her profession as a pediatrician when Eva started school. She worked as a doctor in the state clinic. Her father worked as an engineer for a non- Jew who had a little chemical factory. Even though he was a mechanical engineer by training he studied by himself in order to become a specialist in chemistry for the leather industry.

The war between Germany and Russia began in 1940. Roumania, which had a fascist government, allied with Germany. From the beginning of the war, the Roumanian

people began to hate the Jews and people openly showed their anti-Semitic feelings. As the country became more anti-Semitic under the German influence, Jews gradually lost their rights and had fewer opportunities to work. Jewish families were not even allowed to keep a maid. The Jews of Burcharest were lucky and did not have to wear the yellow star, unlike Jews in other Roumanian towns. Eva's mother could no longer work in the state policlinic. Her father lost his job, but fortunately found work from another non-Jew in a fabric company. During this time, many men and youngsters were deported from different parts of Romania. Eva's school closed. Sometimes the Christians attacked Jews. In 1941 a large number of Jews were taken to slaughterhouses in the capital and were hanged.

After the war started, Eva had to leave her all-girls private school because Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend Roumanian schools. Her parents enrolled her in a private Anglican school named Anglo-Speranza where Jewish girls were accepted. This school was located in a quiet neighborhood in Bucharest. Her family lived near the school, and it only took Eva 15 minutes to walk there. In those times, children walked to school with their mothers. Only the richest people had cars. Eva studied the usual subjects in the Romanian language. She also seriously studied German, French, and English.

The Germans eventually ordered the Roumanian government to deport Jews from many different districts, but the government did not get the necessary trains from the state railroad company. So only two groups were deported from Bucharest. At the end of the war in 1944, the Russians invaded Roumania and Germany was forced to retreat.

During the war Eva's family, like other Jews, listened to the BBC news and were aware of Hitler's rise to power and the anti-Semitism that was happening in Germany. They knew the Germans had labor camps, but didn't know about Auschwitz, the other death camps or the crematoriums. They did not know the fate of the Jews from Poland or Lithuania.

Eva's life was limited during the war. Most Jews didn't work or visit friends because they were afraid German soldiers would arrest them. Luckily, Eva's father was able to keep his job because he had a secret relationship with his non-Jewish employer. This enabled her family to survive. They suffered hardships, like everyone else in the city. Food was available in shops, but it was rationed and could only be obtained in small quantities. They would have to stand in long lines all day and into the night, even during the cold, snowy winter, in order to get food. During the summer Eva remembers having to go into a shelter in her cellar in order to stay safe during bombings. She later learned that two groups of Jews were deported, but did not witness that herself.

Eva met her husband, Jacob, and they married after the beginning of the war. Her husband was a religious Jew. He prayed everyday and went to the synagogue on Friday night for Shabbat and for every holiday. But he was a liberal in his faith. They lived together with her parents and maternal grandparents. Her husband worked for the Jewish community, helping Jews who were being deported to the Ukraine. Eva knit sweaters that were sold through a secret Jewish organization.

During the war, Jacob's parents, Emanuel, a lawyer, and his wife Sophie, were deported from Suceava (in Bukovina) to a small, impoverished settlement of peasants in the Ukraine called Djurin. Jews from many different towns in Bukovina were also deported to other impoverished settlements in the Ukraine, such as Mogilev. Emanuel and Sophie's oldest son, Friedrich, who owned a furniture factory, his wife Paula and their three year old son Eddy were deported at the same time. They traveled through Moldova. When they arrived at the Dnestr River Friedrich attempted suicide by jumping into the water with his son. He was rescued and had to undergo the long journey during the winter with his family and the other deportees. Many deportees died during the winter from the cold and deprivation. Others were shot by Roumanian soldiers. Jacob helped his family by clandestinely sending money via a Roumanian officer. Every member of the family survived the deportation except for Emanuel. At the end of the war the survivors returned to Roumania, either to their hometown of Suceava or to the capitol Bucharest. Many asked the interior ministry for authorization to leave Roumania for Israel.

After the war, the fascist anti-Semites were replaced by anti-Semitic communists. In 1956 Eva, her husband and their two children, Michael (then 16) and Hannah (11) asked the Roumanian government for permission to emigrate to Israel. They waited three long years until they received their passports, and after a long journey finally arrived in Israel in 1961. It took a long time to rebuild their lives in Israel as new immigrants (olim chadashim). Slowly, slowly, they realized that they could have a nice normal life. Michael fought as a soldier in the Six Day War and the Yom Kipper War. Hannah also served as a soldier in the Israeli army.

Hannah and Michael came to America to study and married here. When Eva's husband passed away three years ago, her children invited her to live near them because she had no close family in Israel.

By Arissa Balaban

Friedel Herscher

Friedel Herscher was born on March 10, 1923 in Salzkotten, Germany. In 1937, at the age of 14, she left school and began working in her hometown trading animals and milking cows. She later worked as a housekeeper for a family and tended to their children. When the children left their home, she moved back into her parents' house. At 15, she left to work in an orphanage in the city of Paderborn.

In the midst of her rigorous lifestyle, she decided to visit a community of people who wanted to leave for Palestine. She conversed with the gentleman who was in charge of the organization. She too, wanted to leave the country so she sent a request to the city hall in Berlin. As she was among several people who requested to leave the country she needed to somehow make her request a priority in order to speed up the process. Consequently, the gentleman helping her went to the City Hall and placed her paper on top of all those waiting to be reviewed. Soon enough, her papers were mailed back to her granting her permission to leave.

The individuals who were part of the group were sent to Hof Wecker in Rüdnitz, a city on the outskirts of Berlin. At Hof Wecker, they were trained for the work they would be doing upon their arrival in Palestine. Due to Friedel's past work experiences, she was already well-versed in these skills. However, she had to go anyway. After four weeks at Hof Wecker, the group was told that they would not be able to leave Germany because war had broken out.

They were given two options: to go back to their hometowns or to stay at Hof Wecker and work until an opportunity to leave arose. Friedel's father called and asked her to come home. She didn't want to do so because she knew there was no future for her in Salzkotten. The gentleman who had initially helped Friedel spoke to her father and convinced him to allow her to remain in the community. Five months later, she was transferred to Hamburg where she was hired to take care of children.

Finally, the opportunity to leave the country arose, and in 1940, along with four other girls, she left Hamburg for Berlin. From Berlin, they took a train to Vienna where they stayed in very nice hotels, paid for by the Jewish organization. They resided there for close to two weeks until the annual fair began and they had to leave the hotel to make vacancies for tourists. They packed up their belongings and camped out at a local school. After some time, the entire group departing for Israel was packed onto three luxurious excursion ships that had been built to hold 800, but under these circumstances, carried 1000 people each. They traveled up the Donau River and arrived in Tulcea, a poor town in Romania, on September 10, 1940. Waiting there for them were the ships that would be transporting them illegally into Palestine. These ships were very old and in poor condition, and can be compared to battleships. Greek captains were hired to run the vessels. For the excursion, the ships were loaded with dog biscuits, water, and potatoes. The Greek captains knew they

could be arrested and imprisoned upon reaching Palestine, so they were promised a hefty payment to make the risk worthwhile.

Friedel's ship set sail from Romania on October 1, 1940. Conditions on board were very poor. There was little water, so it was impossible to maintain sanitary conditions. The small amount of food was rationed. One young boy traveling with his mother died of malnutrition during the voyage. On October 10, the ships made a stop in Varna, Bulgaria to replenish the food and water supply. Here, 20 more people boarded. The travelers survived with very little and everyone stole food from one another.

Once again, they ran short of food on October 21 and made a stop in Greece. The passports of all the travelers were taken away. On October 29 the ships departed from Greece. While on the journey, the ship ran out of coal, so the crew had to break apart the ship in order to have wood to burn for fuel. Due to the fact that their passports had been confiscated, all of the voyagers were stateless. Had they not been, they would have been sent back to their country of origin upon arrival in Palestine.

Friedel was on the first ship to arrive in Haifa on November 1. The ship docked at night outside of the port. British security boats surrounded the ship and the security men boarded. They walked around asking the travelers if they had family in Palestine and took down the addresses of the connections the travelers had. At this point, the British did not know what to do with the Jews. They were skeptical of the travelers' stories, and worried that the ships were full of spies, since it was a time of war.

The British did not want to let the travelers into Palestine, so they put the Jews aboard a French liner, Patria, which was bound for Mauritius, a tropical island off the coast of South Africa. The Jews of Palestine had a different plan in mind. The Patria needed coal before departing and the Hagganah, Jewish soldiers, took on the task of stocking the ship. The day before the Patria was set to leave, the Hagganah smuggled a bomb onto the ship. It was a difficult task because the British were always aboard the ship keeping sentry. As a part of the plan, those working for the Jewish organization walked around asking people if they could swim. Several individuals who were able to swim were organized to jump off the ship at 9 A.M. on the day of departure. Those who were scheduled to jump were stationed around the deck. Those who could not swim were told to be on the deck at 9 A.M. sharp. The full plan was kept secret from all the passengers. Only those in charge of the Jewish organization were aware of what was going on. Those told to jump off the ship only knew that they were to jump off the ship.

All of a sudden, the bomb went off; all who were on deck were intended to go into the water. However, the execution of the plan was flawed. The man in charge of putting the bomb onto the ship placed it too close to the outside, causing the ship to break and sink altogether. The water was approaching the top, but not all had escaped the ship, including Friedel. Wooden palettes located on the top of the ship began rolling into the water. The water kept climbing, and with few options, Friedel grabbed onto a palette and floated into the water, holding on for dear life. The ship was now in flames. It turns out that a complete

explosion was prevented somehow by a handy British soldier. Eventually, the chimney of the ship entered the water, causing a catastrophe.

Small British ships were immediately sent out to rescue the people in the water. To further advance the comfort of the Jews who were trying to make it to Palestine, those already in Palestine went around to collect clothes for donation. Several individuals died as a result of all they had been through. When the new immigrants were brought to the security of the land, they were given tea with milk, food, clothes and shoes.

On November 26, the immigrants were taken to camp Athlit, where they stayed in barracks. The British and Jews watched over the camp, where the passengers resided for seven months. Typhus began to spread among the residents of Athlit.

The youth were taken to a kibbutz on June 19, 1941. For two years, Friedel stayed at Ashdod Yakov, near the Sea of Galilee. Here they worked half days, and spent the remainder of their time learning Hebrew. They were also taught how to fight as soldiers for the Hagganah, which included learning how to shoot guns and throw grenades, among other things.

Meanwhile, back at home, Friedel's sister left for America in October of 1941. Her parents weren't as lucky and were sent to a concentration camp in Riga, Latvia in December of the same year.

At this point, the youth in Palestine joined the Hagganah and served in the illegal army. On April 19, 1943, Friedel decided that she did not like the army, so she left for Tel Aviv. There she worked in homes for families, free of charge. While in Tel Aviv, she lived with her cousin who had left for Palestine years earlier.

Friedel got married on March 25, 1947 to a gentleman who waited on tables in hotels in Tel Aviv. He had already been living in Israel for 18 years. On May 20, 1948, Friedel gave birth to her first daughter, Michaella. Shortly thereafter they left for America and have since been living a happy and serene life in San Jose, California.

By Ronny Beer

Henry Stone

Speaking to a Holocaust survivor is one of the most pleasurable things I have ever had the opportunity to do in my life. Now, pleasurable may not seem the appropriate word for listening to the atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II, but hearing a survivor's story also gives me a hint of someone being helped by their fellow man in the worst of times, and that is something wonderful.

Henry Stone is inspirational. He is an engineer like I aspire to be, and his story of survival is an amazing telling of love and respect for his fellow man at a time when that is scarce in the world. Stone started out in Munich, where he was born in 1922. His father had been a soldier during WWI on the German side and had gotten shot in the leg. This was to prove helpful during the Holocaust because people respected a man who had fought for the fatherland and sacrificed for his country. Even though he was a Jew it helped a little -- not enough, but a little.

Stone lived "a normal Jewish life," attended synagogue and received Jewish religious instruction. His family had both Jewish and Christian friends, and were particularly close to one Christian family due to a friendship his father had developed during World War I. While Stone was in high school the non-Jewish boys had to join the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth). He joined the Bund Deutscher Juden which was similar to the boy scouts and organized hikes and trips.

When it became clear to Stone's family that Germany was no place to be a Jew anymore, they tried to get out of the country. With the enormous and sudden demand to leave, it became very difficult for anyone to succeed at all. One of the only ways to escape was to get an affidavit from America. An opportunity for an affidavit for Henry alone came from a relative in Virginia. Even though this relative had never met Henry, he was willing to sacrifice for Henry to come on condition that Henry master a trade. So, at age 15, Henry apprenticed for 60 hours a week in Berlin, 300 miles from home, to learn machine shop work. As a Jew Henry was lucky to get this apprenticeship through a Christian, who had formerly been married to Henry's aunt, who owned a metal working factory. Initially Henry lived with some distant relatives in Berlin. When that family emigrated in the spring of 1938 Henry had to find lodging with another Jewish family. While in Berlin Henry joined the Jewish sports club and went to several Jewish cultural affairs.

This affidavit did not allow the rest of the family to emigrate to America, however. Luckily, the Stones were blessed again when a businessman, a total stranger in New York, sent

an affidavit for the entire family to the American ambassador in Stuttgart. This was it. It was their ticket out of Germany and to the safe haven of the United States. Unfortunately, with all the extra work of trying to learn a skill, Henry contracted appendicitis. He returned to Munich and checked into a hospital. This coincided with the now infamous Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, when Jewish men were rounded up and sent to concentration camps, and the Nazis destroyed Jewish stores and synagogues. During Henry's convalescence the Gestapo did a sweep of their area. Henry's father witnessed the damage on his drive to the hospital. Luckily the Gestapo had missed him that night. Henry's father hid at the hospital for a few days, but the Gestapo checked daily. Then he spent a week in the apartment of his old Christian friends, who were gracious enough to also pick up the Stones' car and hide it in their garage.

When they returned to their home, Henry's father found a little card ordering him to report to Gestapo headquarters. One week later, Henry's father went. The reception officer noted that he was limping. He inquired and found out that Henry's father was a World War I veteran. Henry's father told the officer that he was Jewish and was wondering if the Gestapo was looking for him. The officer asked if Henry's father had received a card from the Gestapo. Henry's father said he did not know because he had not been home yet. The officer said he would sign Henry's father out, but if he found a card waiting for him at home he had to return. When Henry's father returned with the card the next day, he went to the same officer instead of to the assigned room. The officer remembered that he had signed Henry's father out the day before and sent him home again -- another of the lucky blessings that got this family through. Due to this miracle, Henry believes, his father was the only Jewish male between the ages of 17 and 65 in Munich who did not end up in Dachau.

The New York businessman who was helping them get to the United States met with the American ambassador in Stuttgart and discovered that the Stones' affidavit had been lost. Despite enormous challenges of getting through German red tape, the Stones acquired new paperwork and they continued their quest for safety and freedom. Only one problem remained: The U.S. required $5,000 to be deposited in an account in New York. Not only was this a large amount of money, but no one in Germany was allowed to own foreign exchange. An incredibly kind stranger in Switzerland loaned the money to the Stone family and arranged for the wire transfer of funds.

The Stones took physical exams, and then picked the ship that would take the longest to get to America. They sailed to New York and randomly picked the city of Buffalo to call their new home. Since the rules only allowed them to leave Germany with $4 per person, Stone's father gave 1000 marks to four strangers before they sailed, in the hope that these strangers would mail him the money. They all did, and he later received $400 in the mail.

In Buffalo both Henry and his father got jobs that paid eight and ten dollars a week respectively. Working this way they paid back all their debts, including the $5000 in the bank account that had been required for their travel. Henry was drafted into the army and served for three years in the South Pacific. Then he attended college at SUNY Buffalo and got a degree in engineering. He graduated summa cum laude and received a job offer from General Electric. After working for GE he went on to work in nuclear facilities and now does consulting work in San Jose.

Henry Stone says that the German people knew what was going on. He explains that they lost a lot of scientists and other good people through the stupidity of the Holocaust and that those who escaped to the United States improved this country. To him this is the important lesson that the Nazis forgot: People are good and everyone is valuable. Stone's story teaches us that even when the odds seem overwhelming, even when we are ready to give up all hope, there are always people ready to perform miracles.

By Adam Cole

Leja Koltun

Leja Koltun was born in 1926 in Latvia in Daugavpils with a population of 42,000 people, 30% of whom were Jews. Most of the Jews earned their living as shoemakers or tailors. She had 40 people in her family. She is the only survivor.

Leja's father was a private accountant. Her grandfather owned a paint shop and she worked in the store, which was a family business. Her mother died when Leja was only three years old, and as tradition, her father then married her aunt. For the Jews in the city, they had a great life. They owned businesses, and could observe Judaism as much as they wanted.

On June 23, 1941 Hitler occupied the city. Leja's grandfather didn't want to leave his shop, but the other members of the family convinced him to do so. Many Jews lost their shops before they were forced into the ghetto. When the Nazis reached the city, everybody started to flee toward the Latvian border. The officers at the border did not let anybody out, and they were forced to go back home. A week later there was a notice given out stating that all men had to go to the marketplace. From there they were driven to jail where they were shot. Among those men was Leja's father. Women with children were brought to the synagogue, and in groups they were driven to the forest where they were shot.

The rest of Leja's family, which consisted of her aunt, step-mom and little brother, were forced to go work. In this way they escaped the shootings, and were able to make it into a new ghetto. The ghetto was over crowded. Those who were closest to the gates were shot, but Leja, her step-mom, aunt and little brother made it to the very back corner of the ghetto. When a new set of Jews were put into the ghetto Leja and the rest of her family had the chance to join them and escaped the shootings once again.

Two sisters who worked in the ghetto as tailors registered Leja as a part of their family, and that is how she stayed alive. Her aunt was sent out to the city, and she hid in the basement until the end of the war. Her little brother was hidden by the working chefs.

On May 1, 1941, Leja was sent to unload trains, and did not return to the ghetto. Everyone who stayed there during the evacuation, including her little brother, was shot.

On October 28,1943 the working people were brought together and sent off to a concentration camp in Riga, Latvia. After Riga they were sent to Estonia, to a camp known as Erreda. In 1944 all the Jews of Estonia were gathered together in Tallinn, where they were put on a ship, and sent to the camp Shtutgof in Germany. The boat was overloaded with Jews, it was unsanitary, and they were without water for four days. In Shtutgof, Leja and 500 other women were sent to a concentration camp known as Noygam, and from there

they were sent to Bergen-Belsen. In Bergen-Belsen many people began to die from a harsh lice disease (the lice jumped from one person to the other, infecting many people at once). Many people who got this disease died instantly on the ground. Other prisoners had to pour gasoline on the dead bodies and burn them, after which the German officers killed those prisoners, so there wouldn't be any evidence against them.

On April 15, 1945 the remaining prisoners of Bergen–Belsen were freed by the British army. After the Germans were sent away from Bergen-Belsen, the British army couldn't go into the camp, because there were still people who were infected with this harsh disease, including Leja. She was sick for a very long time.

After gaining her freedom Leja returned to Daugavpils, where she started her life over by herself. Out of 40 members of her family, she was the only survivor. Leja is still in disbelief about what happened during that time, and because of this it was very hard for her to give me detailed information. During the interview the tears that were shed gave me more information than what she could tell me with words. Now she lives in America with her children and grandchildren living a happy life. But she will never forget what happened 62 years ago.

By Maryana Smolyanitsky

Marie Donner

Marie Hesky Donner lived a privileged life in Linz, Austria. Her mother died during childbirth and she was raised by her maternal aunt and uncle, who she called mama and papa. They also had a son who was Marie's cousin, but she considered him to be like her brother. Her birth father had regular supervised visiting rights. The family belonged to a Conservative Jewish temple and observed all the holidays. They had cordial relations with their non-Jewish neighbors.

Marie's family was fairly wealthy. She lived in a large house with servants quarters. Mama was a very well known hat designer. Her parents worked together in this business, mama designing the hats and papa dealing with the finances. Marie would spend the day with her nanny, eat dinner with the nanny, and then get dressed up to see her parents. When she saw her parents in the evening Marie would curtsey and then briefly perform for them, either singing a song or reading a poem.

Her father's visits continued, under the supervision of the nanny, until he tried to kidnap Marie when she was five years old. After this incident he lost his visiting privileges and Marie saw him only one more time to get his signature to enable her to leave the country on the kindertransport. Marie found out many years later that he died in Litzmanstadt concentration camp.

Marie went to school and was a rather spoiled child with a lot of spunk and energy. In March 1938, she heard talk of Hitler and what was happening in Germany, but she was only eight years old and did not think much of what she heard on the radio. When Hitler finally entered Austria life changed instantaneously.

The entire population was asked to welcome him into Austria. It was in the middle of March, and the weather was still very cold. An announcer said, "Dear leader, come soon, our feet are getting cold." When Hitler first entered Linz he stopped at the home of Dr. Crane, the Jewish doctor who had delivered him. He saluted the doctor and the rest of his family. Coincidentally, Marie was very good friends with the granddaughter of this doctor.

The Nazis immediately instituted the rule that, if you were an Austrian Jew, you did not own anything anymore. You had no rights and the Nazi party could take anything they wanted. In three short months all Jewish businesses were shut down, with signs everywhere saying "Beschlagnahmt," confiscated.

Not long after that Marie's teacher told her she could not attend school anymore. Marie sat on her teacher's lap and they cried together for a very long time. All Jewish children were thrown out of the normal school district and placed into a school for the mentally unstable. The intent was to humiliate them. The new school was so horrible that Marie stopped

attending even though she was only eight years old. She received private tutoring at home instead.

Not only did the Jews in Austria lose their businesses, they lost their sense of identity as well. All male Jews were now referred to as David and all females as Sarah. In addition, the Nazis could do anything they wanted to the Jews, like spitting on them. The Jews were expected to respond by simply bending down their heads and acting ashamed to be Jewish. Marie could not tolerate such actions. When she was spit at, Marie spit right back. Because of this Marie and her family were kicked out of their house. This enraged her father who had received the iron cross from the German army during World War I. When the Nazi solider took the family's belongings, he threw the medal at the solider.

As a result of their home being confiscated they were forced to move into the now vacant rabbinical apartment in the back of the synagogue. Marie continued to have problems of the same sort. The SA and SS Hitler Youth warned her parents that she was a troublemaker and that she should be moved out of the country before she was taken away.

Because of these incidents Marie's family began to search for ways to send her to safety. They also started to make arrangements to immigrate to the United States, where they had relatives. The Heskys were making progress toward this goal, getting together the necessary paperwork and packing their belongings into trunks, when Kristallnacht occurred in November 1938. In the rabbinical apartment Marie slept under a stained glass window. That night she woke up to chaos outside and shards of glass cut her skin. Teenagers from the Hitler Youth broke into the apartment. They grabbed Marie's father and pulled him into the sanctuary. Marie, her mama, and her brother heard a lot of banging and crashing. The entire family was terrified that papa was being killed. Actually he was being forced, at gunpoint, to watch as the Hitler Youth smashed all the precious Jewish objects in the synagogue, including the Torah.

When Marie's father came back into the apartment, as white as his nightshirt, the rest of the family was happy to see him alive, but he was devastated. The Hitler Youth threatened to shoot the family if anyone tried to escape. The entire family began to panic, although they were unaware that the Nazi teenagers had poured kerosene over the benches and set the synagogue on fire.

After a short period of time, one of the Hitler Youth came back. He opened the door for the Heskys and told them, "It is better to be shot than to be burned alive." Marie only heard "to be shot," so she screamed in terror as her family attempted to flea the fire. Papa had to gag her so that her screams would not attract attention and they could escape undetected. They fled across the street to the Jewish Community Center and service buildings, where other Jewish families were also able to take refuge from the violence. Marie continues to be haunted by her memories of her Christian former friends and neighbors cheering the fire, chanting in unison, "The Jews are burning," while they assumed the Heskys were being burned to death. Within an hour the SS arrived and arrested all the males over age 15, herding the women and children together into one large room. The only things the women

and children could see were two rifles pointing toward them. When a small boy asked his mother if these men were robbers, he was knocked unconscious by a rifle butt. Fortunately, by evening the women and children were allowed to leave the building, and the men and boys were returned to them the next morning.

During this time, Marie's uncle, Max Hirschfeld, acted as the liason between the Nazi party and the Jewish community. He personally worked with Adolf Eichmann, who was known as "the beast of the concentration camps" and who was working to rid Austria of Jews. Hirschfeld played poker with Eichmann with the understanding that every time Hirschfeld won, a blanket could be brought to a Jew in prison. Max Hirschfeld also played Robin Hood by making wealthy Jews who he helped immigrate, leave behind their extra money for those Jews who could not flee.

Shortly after Kristallnacht Marie and her family moved to Vienna. It was a larger city so they were not as visible. They were still making efforts to leave the country and Marie was more scared than she had ever been. Her parents arranged for Marie to leave Austria on a kindertransport. Even though Marie was only eight, they were unable to accompany her to the train for fear of arousing suspicion. Just before Marie left, her grandmother gave her a gift of a Shirley Temple doll and a matching jacket for herself. All Marie was able to take with her were the clothes on her back and this doll. Marie cherished that doll and carried it with her throughout her entire journey.

When the kindertransport arrived in Holland the Dutch greeted the Jewish children with open arms, lemonade, cookies and balloons. For the first time in a long time Marie felt safe. After her brief stop in Holland Marie crossed the English Channel and landed in London. A group of the children were taken to a hostel. At this hostel Marie was finally relieved of the terror. She was able to run around in the fields of this hostel, she had English lessons, and was able to be free and enjoy whatever she pleased. Marie was very happy at this hostel; she enjoyed learning English and loved all her friends there.

When war broke out between England and Germany at the end of 1939 the children staying at this hostel, which was in a dangerous area, were divided into smaller groups and moved to various locations. Marie was nine years old by this time. The matron in charge of the new location was sadistic. She beat the children and did not feed them. The oldest child at this hostel was 13. She wrote a letter to the central agency in London to tell them what was happening. Marie snuck the letter out and mailed it. The hostel was soon inspected and the matron was jailed.

After this incident things were turned around completely for the children. They were well fed and clothed, and people even came to play with them. The children's pictures, with numbers hanging from their necks, were published so people would give them foster homes. One day Marie was chosen, and with another little girl was sent on a train to Birmingham. When Marie finally arrived she meet Harry and Ada Griffin, her new foster parents. To Marie they seemed very old, around 50 years of age. The Griffins got Marie back in touch with her parents. They enrolled her in a religious school where she was taught by nuns.

Marie even attended church every Sunday where she would take communion, although she had no idea what she was doing at the time. Marie enjoyed her new life. She enjoyed going to school again and made a lot of new friends. The Griffins were apparently fairly wealthy people with the largest air raid shelter in the neighborhood, where people took refuge during the frequent bombing raids. At one point while Marie lived in Birmingham she would sleep in the bomb shelter every night with the Griffins and a few other neighbors. As the bombardment intensified Marie needed to wear a gas mask all the time, even while at school. The children were issued Disney character gas masks and Marie had Daffy Duck.

Eventually Mama and Papa, who were still in Vienna, got affidavits to emigrate to the US for all four members of their family. Marie's family wanted her to go back to Vienna so she could move with them, but the British authorities would not send her back to Hitler occupied territories. Her parents left for the US without her.

Marie lived in England for two years until her family was able to send for her in 1940. The Griffins put Marie on a train to London where children from all over England assembled to be transferred to Scotland, where they boarded ships bound for the United States. On the way to this holding tank Marie noticed that a Shirley Temple film was playing in London. She convinced two other girls to join her and snuck out to see the film. During the movie there was an air raid and the theatre became a bomb shelter from which no one was allowed to leave. When Marie finally returned to the point of assembly the other children had already left for Scotland. There was hell to pay, and Marie and her friends were sent to Scotland a day or two later. They missed the original boat, but this turned out to be a miracle of good fortune, because it later struck a mine at sea. There were no survivors.

Marie arrived safely in New York and stayed with some distant relatives for a couple of days before taking the train to San Francisco to meet her parents. She was very nervous, traveling alone at such a young age, during the train ride. She reached San Francisco on election night 1940.

When Marie first arrived in San Francisco she was very standoffish. She had to integrate herself into this new society, into new ways of living with her parents and it was very strange for her. Eventually everything worked out. She lived in a nice home with her parents and her brother, and did well in school. She graduated from high school at age 16 and went to community college. Although she was accepted to Stanford University when she turned 18 she chose to get married instead of continuing her education. Today she lives happily in Sunnyvale, California, and is just as vibrant at 74 as she was at age 10.

By Danna Rubin

Michael Novice

Michael, a man, a husband, a father, a Ph.D., an American citizen, a Jew, and a Holocaust survivor; so many identities but only one mattered. Michael Novice lives in San Jose, California. His home is nicely furnished and welcoming. His wife offered food like the natural Jewish mother would. Books everywhere in his house are an obvious mark that this family is very learned. Never would you have guessed that when he would pull up his sleeve a loathing memory would be tattooed on his arm.

Michael was born on June 15, 1927 in Warsaw. He was the youngest of his siblings. His childhood was pretty normal for a Jewish child. Michael went to a private Jewish school and his family was fairly religious. His siblings and friends played in the streets and played jacks, soccer, tic-tac-toe, marbles and an assortment of other games that kept them busy. While the kids were off studying, his family owned a business selling hats to retail customers.

Michael had the abysmal luck to live in the city of Warsaw, Poland. The street he lived on would become part of the infamous Warsaw Ghetto. The time he spent inside the Warsaw Ghetto could only be described as miserable. His family was starving. Jewish people would steal bread from fellow Jews out of such desperation. In the Warsaw Ghetto, Michael saw the burial society pick up dead people from the street on a daily basis. Michael's parents wanted to get at least one of their children out of Warsaw. Being the youngest, Michael was the one chosen to be smuggled out.

Michael's mother took orders and traveled to customers for the family business. One of her customers knew a Polish policeman. Michael's family paid off the customer, which was a very risky undertaking. Michael escaped Warsaw to live with his relatives in Ostrowiec. He lived there from 1941 until 1944. In Ostrowiec, Michael worked in a local ironworks factory. In 1942 the town was liquidated. Since Michael worked in a factory making items needed for the German war machinery, this prolonged his work in Ostrowiec until 1944.

The day came when it was Michael's turn to find out what Auschwitz was. The Jewish people were piled into closed cattle cars and taken to the living hell. Michael had no idea what Auschwitz would have in store for him, but he soon found out. Upon arrival Michael heard the Germans shouting, "Get out!" The SS had vicious dogs growling and they were using heavy sticks to hit people. People noticed the chimneys and the peculiar smell and knew their end was near. Michael was with a group of young men, so they did not have to go through selection. Michael was registered, B5247, on his arm with a syringe and a needle. No longer was he a person, he was just a piece of a massive plan.

Once in the camp, the Nazis listed off types of jobs the Jews could "volunteer" for. They asked for "zimmerman" which means a house framer. Michael did not know what that was but he volunteered for the job anyway. He worked on making the building of a company,

I.G. Farben, that made chemicals and artificial rubber. This place was known as Auschwitz 3 or Manowitz. The hours were excessive but in Michael's mind, in order to survive, working was the only option. People received only the smallest portions for meals, usually consisting of coffee that tasted more like water, stew that only had a few pieces of potato in it and a very small portion of bread that was always stale. The men would have to run several minutes to get to the latrines in the freezing weather. They would have only a few seconds to relieve themselves.

Every day was one more day closer to death. Michael did not know the point of living. Nobody understood why he needed to get up in the morning. They had nothing to look beyond, no home, no family and no life. People would pray on their own in the camps because communal prayer was not even an option. Michael may have found comfort in praying to G-d, as there was nothing else to look forward to. He said, "I had a direct line to the Almighty."

In the beginning of 1945 Michael was marched out of Auschwitz on the Death March which led eventually to Buchenwald, in Germany. Michael thought that Buchenwald was disorganized and unpredictable unlike Auschwitz. In Buchenwald, Michael and the group of men did useless work. The Nazi soldiers told the Jews to carry heavy stones from one place to another. Michael was eighty pounds and the rocks were as big as he was, but he kept carrying the stones. The next day the Nazis told the men to bring the stones back. They accomplished nothing; there really was no work that needed to be done. The Jewish people worked like ants carrying huge things on their tiny bodies. From Buchenwald, Michael was taken to Terezin, a death camp. He stayed only a short while under Nazi control. On May 8, 1945, the Russians came to liberate the Jewish people from their nightmare.

Finally, the day came when the Jewish people were liberated from hell. At the time Michael was very sick in barracks in Terezin on his deathbed. The Russian liberators took care of Michael and nursed him back to better health. From May until August he was in Terezin recuperating. Michael said it was a thrill to have the feeling of survival and not to worry about being hit over the head by the Nazis. Once the war ended the tables were turned and the once so powerful Nazis were afraid for their lives. They stripped off their uniforms to hide their identities. The survivors ran after them shouting, "Get out of here!" and they chased the Nazis. Michael was too sick to run with them.

He was taken to a hospital. At the hospital he was treated for pleurisy by Russian military doctors. When he was discharged from the hospital, Michael found out about a group of Holocaust survivors who qualified to go to England. Michael qualified for one of the 732 spots in this program, but his cousin with whom he spent most of the awful years of the Holocaust, did not qualify and they painfully had to part. The 732 young death camp survivors were flown to England on Lancaster bomber planes. The planes had no seats, but the kids were happier than ever. The pilots gave the young people chocolate; to Michael this was a gift from heaven.

The 732 boys were taken to Windermere, which had previously been used as an air force barracks in the Lake District. The children had no home after the war so they stayed in

the hostels. This way they could settle down and have a chance to learn a trade. Michael had tutors to teach him English, which he quickly grasped. Soon after Michael arrived in Windermere he got very sick with tuberculosis and he was taken to a sanatorium. The doctor who treated him was Jewish and told Michael the story of Job. He compared the story of Job to what happened to the boys. At the time, Michael did not know what the doctor was talking about because Michael's education in general studies and Judaism ended when he was twelve. Later, Michael found out that Job was a man who suffered an immense amount, but remained strong, with the belief that G-d does everything for a reason far beyond what human minds can comprehend. In 1946, Michael was transferred to a sanatorium in Ashford, Kent. There, Michael received lessons in many subjects.

In 1946, the group of Ashford students, including Michael, were taken to a mansion in the village of Ugly. A rabbi there suggested that Michael continue his education in the field of physics and mathematics. From that point, Michael quickly finished his general education in half the time a normal person would. He completed his high school studies quickly and moved on to a bachelors, a masters, and finally a Ph.D. This brilliant man received his first paying job in 1952 and he finally became independent. In September of 1954 he married his wife, Ruth. They had three children, Judith, Miriam, and David. They raised the children with Jewish values, ethics and identities. While Michael was in the death camps, this could never have happened. In 1964, Michael's work brought him and his family to the United States. He went to upstate New York to work for the Westinghouse Corporation. In 1975, Michael moved to Silicon Valley in California where he currently resides. Michael is retired now and continues to be an active member of his community.

After the Holocaust, Michael began rebuilding his life. He is living a full life and continues to do so every day. In Michael's words, "During the last year of the war, I followed the same path as Elie Wiesel." That would be too simply stated, as if the vile path was paved for him. He was trapped in a massive plan of destruction and his goal was survival. Michael lived through what most of us are fortunate enough to only imagine. In a sense Michael triumphed over Hitler's plan. In spite of it all, Michael's will power remained. Michael's body was frail, but his mind stayed strong. His life was broken, but not lost. Six million lives were lost but their spirits remain and so do their stories. It is every single person's responsibility to remember the six million and all those who were affected; not only for the Jewish people, but for the human race and for human dignity.

Michael, a man, a husband, a father, a Ph.D., an American citizen, a Jew and a Holocaust survivor; so many identities and now all of them matter.

By Talia Wolf

Nella Hoffman

Nella Adele Gilda Fortunata Della Rocca Hoffman, was born on May 7, 1928, to Carlo Della Rocca and Eugenia Caffatz, in Turin, Italy. Nella has one younger sister named Ada, who lives in Italy. Her parents owned a very successful clothing store. Turin was/is a very cultural city. Nella grew up in a Conservative Jewish household. She attended a Conservative day school and synagogue and became a Bat Mitzvah.

Nella feels very fortunate to have survived the Holocaust, as well as, the numerous life-threatening illnesses that plagued her as a child, which included appendicitis, peritonitis, typhus, and surgery. She feels very fortunate to still be alive today. As a result, Nella feels that the name Fortunata is more then just a name; it has a special meaning to her.

In 1940, when Nella was 12, Italy under Mussolini entered the war. He was a fascist. Life started to slowly change for her and the people of her country. Until then, anti-Semitism was not very noticeable. With Mussolini in power, Nella noticed that when she was walking down the street, people would shout derogatory comments toward her. They would say "bad Jew, dirty Jew, leave Italy." There were not many Jews in Italy, so when people started to call them that, she felt very uncomfortable. The expression of anti-Semitism was something that really shocked Nella. She was not used to it because before in Italy, the Jews were practically ignored. Most Italians shared the same facial coloring and features. It was safe to assume that Jews did not "stand out in a crowd." During this time, Mussolini required that all students in all the schools to wear the same brown uniform of the Fascist party.

In 1943, things took a turn for the worse. Jews were forced out of public schools and required to go only to Jewish schools. Jewish teachers were fired from public schools. They were only allowed to teach in Jewish schools. As a result, the Jewish students had the best teachers, the cream of the crop. All educational institutions were forced to say three prayers: first for the king, then to Mussolini and then of their own religion. Nella recalls that Primo Levi, who was older, attended the same school as she did.

As the Nazis became more powerful in Italy, Nella's father told her that they needed to leave, change their names and get rid of everything. For Nella, the worst part was the fact that she had to throw away the box of love letters her boyfriend had written to her. She loved him very much. Her father bought falsified papers and Nella became Nella Esposito. After they got rid of all their personal belongings, they wrote the property title over to a good friend of Nella's mother. They also put the apartment and the clothing store in the friend's name. She promised them that whenever they returned, she would give back their possessions.

At one point, her father thought that things weren't so bad near their home. He sent Nella

back to their town to pay the caretaker of her family's property. Nella recalled an incident when she was getting onto the train, to return to her family in hiding. There were German soldiers at the station. One of the soldiers called her over and noticed that she was wearing a beautiful ring. He told her to show him the ring and to take it off. He could not believe what a nice ring it was, and was about to keep it, but the other soldier looked at him and told him to leave Nella alone, that she was only a little girl. The soldier gave back the ring and they went their separate ways. The soldiers never asked her if she was Jewish because the Italians all look the same. There was no way to distinguish the Jews from the Italians. Nella was scared to death after that encounter because she still had to go back and forth to pay the helper.

Later on, the family decided to go back to their home because they were told that the war was not going to get worse, and that nothing bad was going to happen. On this train ride back to Turin, the Gestapo was staring at her. He thought she was very beautiful and he played footsie with her whenever the train went into a tunnel. One time, she decided to talk to him and asked if it was true that the Germans were killing all the Jews. Not giving her a straight answer, he told her that some people were bad, but not all. It was because of those people that all the Germans had that reputation. The Gestapo was so intrigued by her looks, he asked her to the Valentino, a park in Turin. Her father was furious that Nella talked to a German. Her father would have been even angrier had he known that Nella kept the date with the German soldier. She even allowed him to take pictures of her. The soldier never suspected that she was a Jew.

After things got really unbearable, Nella's family took the train to leave Turin for the final time. It just happened to be the day before Mussolini announced that the Jews were going to be sent to concentration camps and their belongings would be confiscated. (Years later, Nella found out that two hours after her family's escape, the Nazis came looking for them to seize their property).

On the train ride out, the cars were full of Jews trying to escape captivity. Their first stop was a small town where they stayed in a beautiful resort in Piedmont: Motta Costiglole. Nella recalls that she and her sister were sitting on a bench when they were approached by two young college students. One of the students was from Egypt and spoke fluent Italian. He was so taken with Nella and her sister's beauty, that he wrote a beautiful poem, in Italian, for them. Nella can still recite this poem.

Nella and her family were forced to leave soon after because people were beginning to become suspicious and asking questions. Finally, they decided to live with their aunt in Genova. Her father's sister had married a Catholic man so they thought they would be safe hiding there. The father had a box of personal belongings and asked if his sister would keep it for him because he did not know what the outcome of the war would be. Unfortunately, one of the relatives stole the items so Nella's family was left with nothing. That same relative also turned the family in to the fascist who went to the apartment in search for Nella and her family. Lucky for them, Nella's father talked the fascist into giving them freedom in exchange for money. The fascist gave them thirty minutes to leave town. This

was very hard on Nella because she was constantly on the run never having a permanent home.

Eventually, Nella's family found a hiding place with a family friend who helped them escape to the mountains, where they stayed at another resort. Nella was forced to pretend to be Catholic, which meant going to church everyday. The family did not want anyone to suspect that they were Jewish. Nella had never been to church before, so she had no idea what to do. She imitated the people around her, following their hand movements (signing the cross). One day, a Nazi was spotted coming down the mountains. Luckily, Nella's father saw him in time and they were able to run again to safety.

By this time, the trains were shut down, so they were forced to walk all the way to Laspecia. They walked for days through tunnels in the dark. By chance, they ran into other family members who were also in hiding. At this point, Nella's father had made up his mind. They were going to try and escape to the American occupied territory in Italy. Nella's mother's cousin, Ernesto Jachia, decided to go with them. Nella and her sister were sent downtown to get a backpack from the fascists. They were not going to give the girls the backpack unless the girls agreed to date them. Knowing they were leaving the next day, Nella agreed. With that, the fascists gave the girls a ride home. When their father saw them through the window, he flipped out. He could not believe she brought fascists to their hideout, but Nella calmed him down by explaining the story to him.

The next day, the family hired a guide to lead them through the mountains to the American territory in Viaraggio. It was an extremely difficult journey. They walked for at least four or five days straight from Laspeciao to Viaraggio. The mountains were so steep she and her sister would ride on their jackets down the mountain since it was too hard to walk. They walked up and down, up and down. At one point, there was a huge area filled with dead bodies of people who had also tried to escape through the mountains. They had been shot by the Nazi's.

From the top of the mountain, they could see the Americans fighting the Germans. It was a traumatic experience trying to stay quiet so they would not be noticed as hundreds of people were fighting. At one point on their journey to safety, Nella's father fell in a crevasse. The family thought they lost him because it was nearly impossible for him to get out of the hole. Someone had to lift him up by his neck in order for him to get to safety. Once Nella's father was safe, he took her sister and went ahead to gain some ground. At this point, Nella's mother was so tired and drained that she collapsed and told Nella to go on without her, that she wanted to die right there. Nella would not have it. She refused and carried her mother as much as she could the rest of the way. When they finally arrived, they were confronted by an African-American troop who treated them like spies. Nella describes the encounter of coming face to face with this all black American troop as one of "surprise." You see, they had never seen people of color before. After they were cleared from being spies they were able to travel around the village. Her father, overjoyed, went down to the floor and prayed to G-d, thanking him for keeping his family safe.

Nella and her family stayed in Viaraggio, where they rented a house until the end of the war. She can remember how excited everyone was when the news came to their town. People were dancing in the streets, partying all night long. Since the war was over, her family was able to go home and live in their house, which their friend was watching for them. She gave everything back to them, except for the merchandise that had been stolen by a farmer during the war.

After the war, Israeli soldiers came to Italy. Nella and her sister went dancing. It was there her sister met a soldier and asked him to come and meet her family. That man was Eric Hoffman. He was a German Jew. His family, for the most part, was able to flee Nazi Germany although his family lost a thriving cattle business to the Nazis. He escaped to Israel and was part of the Hagganah. He was quite a bit older than Nella's 17 years. He fell in love with Nella and they soon married. They made their first home in Israel. After a few years, they moved to the United States. They established several businesses and raised a family of three children and eight grandchildren.

Throughout my interview with Nella she often referred to her blue eyes. The German officer, the fascist officer, etc. were all taken in by her good looks and her blue eyes. Nella has always felt that it was her blue eyes that saved her family. Thus, she has titled this period in her life as: "My Blue Eyes Saved Me: The Nella Hoffman Story."

It is my opinion that Nella played a very important part in her family's survival. I don't doubt that her gorgeous blue eyes, at certain moments, helped her family avoid capture. However, I sense that Nella Adele Gilda Fortunata Della Rocca Hoffman, had an inner strength, an adventurous side to her and incredible tenacity that enabled this tiny woman to come through this dark period of her life. She is funny, gracious and incredibly warm.

By Marni Swedroe

Phyllis Mattson

Phyllis Mattson was born Felicitas Finkel on August 9, 1929 in Vienna, Austria. She was the only child of Laura, a seamstress, and Samuel, an accountant. Her mother supported the family because her father was out of work due to the depression. She spent her few years before the war playing with the few Jewish friends she had in the neighborhood. The neighborhood she lived in was a mixed area of mostly Catholics and few Jews.

Phyllis doesn't really remember a Jewish community. She does remember having Jewish friends but can't remember going to temple that often. Her parents weren't very religious before the war but became more religious during and after it. Austria was a Catholic country, and Catholicism was part of public school, but the few Jews who attended her school were excused from Catholic worship.

When Hitler took over Austria in 1938 many aspects of her life quickly changed. Phyllis remembers the day Hitler's convoy rolled down the street; it seemed to go on forever. She was very frightened during this experience. After Hitler took power, she was forced to go to a different school for Jewish children. She wasn't able to visit many of her friends anymore because the streets became dangerous. One day on the street she was surrounded by a group of older boys, Hitler's Youth gangs, who spit on her and called her derogatory names. Another impact to her family was that non-Jewish customers stopped paying her mother for her seamstress work. As a result, her family lost most of its income. After Kristallnacht (November 9, 1938), her family was forced out of their apartment and had to live with another Jewish family they didn't know.

In 1939, her father, along with 2000 other men, was taken prisoner by the Germans because he was stateless, meaning he wasn't a citizen of the country he lived in. He was forced to leave the country or face deportment to a concentration camp. Most of these men were given refuge in England. After England declared war on Hitler, the country became nervous of the growing German speaking population so declared them POWs even though they were refugees. Her father was then sent by a ship, called the Dunera, to Australia and remained a POW for two years before being released to work. He spent the remainder of the war years in Australia.

After her father left, Phyllis and her mother moved to a room in a friend's house. Phyllis can't remember how the two of them were able to survive on their own. In 1940, her mother was able to get Phyllis passage on a Kindertransport to America to live with a distant aunt. Phyllis came to America by ship and it only took about 10 days. She was utterly amazed by the beauty and elegance of the ship. She had never been on anything quite like it so it was a very interesting experience and the food was so good. When she arrived in New York, she spent one day there with Jewish women, the committee members who had helped to get her on the transport. They showed all the ten children who came by the transport many

of the sights and sounds of New York. The next day, she was put on a train, by herself to Oakland and then on a ferry to San Francisco where she moved in with her aunt.

While in America, she kept in touch with both of her parents. The letters she sent to her parents were all censored. In her letters her mother always invoked God's name, never losing faith that God would save her and that she would be rescued. Phyllis's mother planned to follow Phyllis to America soon, but her visas were denied. She was murdered by the Nazis in 1942, although Phyllis didn't know about it until many years later.

Phyllis found herself attending American schools, learning English and soon becoming much like an average American girl. She went to the movies, socialized with friends and participated in activities typical of American youth.

After a few months, it became apparent that Phyllis' mother would not be joining her soon, and Phyllis' aunt decided Phyllis should leave her home. Phyllis was sent from foster home to foster home and finally to an orphanage.

In 1946, her father came to America and she moved in with him. Together, they began a new life. But their lives had gone in somewhat different directions. Phyllis had become a typical American youth during the war years, while her father had become Orthodox because of the war. As a result, they had many arguments over cultural misunderstandings.

As a result of meeting and interviewing Phyllis, I learned a little bit about a different group of people deeply affected by the Holocaust, the children of the Kindertransport. I had never heard a story quite like this one and found it very interesting. I was glad to hear from someone who was helped and able to avoid some of the horrors of the Holocaust.

I believe that Phyllis considers herself to be one of the "lucky ones" who lived through the Holocaust. I know she appreciates the opportunities she had and the fact that she was able to make a good life for herself in America after the war.

By Craig Kabert

Rachkmiel Koltun

Rachkmiel Koltun told me the story of the Jewish tragedies in Lithuania, and his near-death experience in the Holocaust. On June 21, 1941, Germans occupied Kaunas, and organized pogroms against the Jews. Three thousand eight hundred ninety Jews were slaughtered. A few synagogues were burned, and 60 Jewish homes were burned all within one week. On August 15, 1941 all Jews of Kaunas were put into the Kaunas ghetto. This place became a symbol of fear, tears and suffering for everybody. Jews lived in the harsh cold, they were sent into slavery, and every day of their lives they waited for their deaths.

Forts were built all around Kaunas, and on October 29, 1941 in the ninth fort, 10,000 Jews were killed, all in one day. On this day Rahmil's father, step-mom, and all of her family, and his aunt's family, which consisted of 10 people, were killed, and Rachkmiel at the age of 14 was left all alone, without a family. The people who were around Rachkmiel during the rest of this time looked after him. They gave him food, cared for him when he was sick, and hid him from the pogroms.

Each person who lived in this ghetto was recorded as a worker. They received a food ration card because they worked. People who did not want to work gave their cards to someone else who worked instead and received their rations of food. (There was no photo on the card so anybody could get away with it). These people were known as "angels" in the ghetto. Rachkmiel became one of those angels for a watch repairman named Katz. Rachkmiel unloaded trains for an electricity manufacturer, or he would walk to the airport to unload fighter planes. He did a variety of jobs.

In January 1943 Rachkmiel was sent to a concentration camp that was located 35 miles away from Kaunas, called Kashidar. In this camp the Jews gathered wood and did other lumber work. In Kashidar the police would change frequently from German officers to Lithuanian officers. One morning when they were getting ready to go to work, they found out that the officers had shot all the German soldiers. Some Jews managed to escape to the partisans. Rachkmiel and his friends decided not to run because they knew that the Lithuanian officers would catch them and it would not turn out good for them. A few hours after this happened, Germans arrived and they began to beat the Jews. After this, Kashidar was liberated and the remaining Jews (including Rachkmiel) were sent to Kasloo-Ruda. When the Red Army was approaching, Rachkmiel managed to escape. On August 1, 1944, Rachkmiel was back in Kaunas. His attempts to find people he knew were unsuccessful. Rachkmiel joined the war medical hospitals, and soon after they accepted him into the army.

After the war, Rachkmiel returned to Kaunas, got married and had a family. He married Leja Lesina, now known as Leja Koltun. Since then many years have passed, but the memories of the Holocaust and what happened still stays in their minds. And to this day he does not know what miracle happened that saved him from this hell. Presently Rachkmiel and his wife Leja, together with his family and grandchildren, live in America.

By Maryana Smolyanitsky

Regina Eisenbrener Zelker

Regina was standing next to her mother, as all the Jews were lined up and counted. Her mother was the last person the Germans counted off. She, as well as the others, were to be taken away. At the time Regina was only 14 and she thought her mother was being taken to a labor camp. Little did she know that her mother was to be taken to Treblinka never to be seen again. This was the first time Regina truly realized that her life would never be the same.

After selection was over, the SS chased all the Jews back into their homes. By this time, the Jews were not allowed to leave their homes without the permission of the German SS. They were forced to wear armbands with a Jewish star on it as identification and if Jews were seen outside their homes, they were beaten or shot.

After about a month, the Nazis constructed barracks for all the Jews to live in. They had to leave everything they owned behind and move into these rat-infested barracks. For four long years, Regina, her two sisters, and her father lived in these barracks and did slave labor just to avoid being shot. She worked everywhere from the airport, to the coal mines, railroads, and gardens. Everyone had to work. The Nazis shot anyone who stayed in the barracks. Regina's meals consisted of warm water with whatever could be found lying around, and a piece of moldy bread if she was lucky.

Once someone stole a piece of bread from the ovens. He was taken and hung on the spot and the Germans left him there for months. They forced everyone at the camp to walk by him and look into his face as a warning of the penalty for doing anything wrong. When Regina passed him, she couldn't look. She covered her face. Because the man's body was next to the bathroom, she was afraid to go. She found a can near the kitchen and used that as her bathroom for months because she couldn't bear to see him or the gallows.

Time passed and Regina was transferred to Czestochowa, where she stayed for one year until 1945. The Germans took them from those barracks to work in the amunition factories. Once they arrived at Czestochowa, all the children were taken away from their parents. Regina began to cry for the children and the parents who lost them. All of a sudden she heard a voice she hadn't heard in many years. She looked up, and her mother appeared right in front of her, wearing exactly what she was wearing the day she was taken away. She told Regina not to worry and that everything was going to be fine. For the time being, she believed what her mother told her.

The person overseeing everyone's work in the ammunition factory was an animal. He was a Polish civilian. He would go on random checks around the factory and if anyone didn't do their job correctly, the overseer would viciously beat them. When he came to Regina's station, he took a bullet Regina had just finished filing, checked it through the light and realized that it wasn't filed all the way. He grabbed hold of Regina and started throwing her around. He bashed her in the head many times, which caused her to lose her hearing in her left ear, and knocked out most of her teeth.
In 1945, while Regina was working in the ammunition factory, the Nazis took the slave laborers out and put them in a big garage. Regina asked one of the Germans what was going to happen. He just answered, "We are taking you all to be executed." Hearing that they were all to be killed, Regina begged the SS to kill her first so that she wouldn't see the rest of her family killed. At that moment the Russians came and started firing on the camp. Regina didn't know what was going on; all she knew was that they had to run to the garage where she expected to be killed by the Germans in order to escape the flying bullets. The Russians swept through the camp and destroyed all the Germans, liberating Regina, her two sisters, and her father.

The Russians told everyone to go wherever they wanted. Regina's father told her and her sister that they had to run, to get as far away from the camp as possible. They walked barefoot in the snow. The Russian soldiers told them to just take whatever they wanted from anyone's home. Regina's sister found boots, and, although they were twice the size of her actual feet, if it wasn't for those boots, she would have died.

They found their way back to Demblin, Regina's hometown. What was once a town filled with thriving Jews, now was somewhat a ghost town. Their Polish neighbors stole all the houses that once belonged to the Jews. Regina's father used to work in the military and actually fought in WWI, which made no difference to the Nazis during the war. The war never really started for Regina, until the day her mother was taken away.

Regina was born on March 12, 1926. She and her family were never very religious, although they believed in G-d and celebrated the Jewish holidays. There were a lot of Jews in Demblin who lived alongside the Christians and other non-Jews fairly peacefully. It was hard for Regina to be back in Demblin after the war because she remembered the beautiful town of her childhood, not a desolate town that evoked fears of being killed in her sleep by her Polish neighbors. Regina's house had been ransacked long ago for anything valuable. Regina, her two sisters, and her father only stayed in Demblin for one night because there was nothing left for them there.

Regina and her family found their way to Lodz. Here Regina met a wonderful man. They were married and soon after, came to the United States. The boat ride to the United States

was unbearable because of the lice and the rats. When Regina and her husband reached Ellis Island, they had a different sort of selection to pass. It was here that they had to prove that they were healthy enough to be able to support themselves. As time passed, Regina and her husband found themselves in the giant melting pot of the United States, living as people once again. Regina just had her 78th birthday in March. She lives in Cupertino, California and is in a constant fight for her life due to her diabetes.

Regina's story touched my heart to such an extent that I cannot find the words to express it. I have read many Holocaust stories before, but being able to hear the survivor tell me her story is something entirely different. Regina survived the horrors and un-humanistic crimes committed against countless individuals in Europe. Her sprit and strength to go on each day and rebuild her life half way across the world, is something I wish to have. Regina's story and strength are something I will never forget and will pass on to others with the hope that it will touch them as deeply as it touched me.

By Hannah Osofsky

Rosa Cohn

Rosa Cohn was born to Karl and Adele Katz on September 3, 1925 in the Austrian capital city of Vienna. Her family was no different from those of her neighbors and classmates. They were Austrian people, except for one thing. Rosa and her family were also Jewish.

Rosa lived a typical childhood, not all that different from the life of a young American today. She went to piano lessons, had a brother, Viktor, six years younger than she, and attended a school where she had many friends. Rosa's father worked at a firm in Vienna and her mother was at home with the children. Rosa was very much loved by her family. As for Jewish community and life, Rosa took a class in Jewish history and occasionally attended the local synagogue with the encouragement of the teacher.

However, the peaceful life Rosa and her family had enjoyed changed in March of 1938 when German soldiers under the command of Adolf Hitler invaded Austria. Rosa was transferred into a separate Jewish school, where Jewish university professors were forced to teach. Children slowly began disappearing from her classes. Some returned after a few weeks, others did not. Rosa still remembers the funeral of an especially beloved professor who committed suicide when his non-Jewish wife left him. Ominous events began piling up. Strange things began to happen; kids from the Hitlerjugend taunted her for being Jewish (she ended up hitting one boy, and rightly so), elderly Jewish men were made to scrub sidewalks under the supervision of SS officers, and in early November of 1938, Jewish businesses were vandalized and closed. Rosa's family were forced to move to a different apartment. There was talk of things happening outside Vienna, but for the most part, people did not think much of it. Rosa worried constantly about her family, especially whenever one of them was not at home. When Rosa heard about an opportunity to go to kibbutzim in Israel, she was very interested in leaving Austria. "No Hitler could come there," she enthusiastically thought. But her parents did not allow it; what was happening in Austria "could not last forever," they told her.

But things got worse. On Rosa's 14th birthday, September 3, 1939, the Second World War began. Some Jews were taken into the "work force." There was one law that would require Rosa to go also, so Rosa's parents arranged for her to be put on a "kindertransport" train to Denmark. Parting with her younger brother, father, and mother was sad at the time, but she was sure that she would be returning soon. So in December of 1939 Rosa left Vienna. She did not know at the time that she would never return. She was 14 years old.

Rosa went with about 20 other children on a train that took her to Jutland in northern Denmark. She stayed with distant family friends who were wonderful and welcoming to

her. Rosa stayed safely and comfortably with this family until April 9, 1940, when Hitler's troops occupied Denmark overnight. Again, German soldiers were everywhere. Rosa was forced to leave her host family and to move to Copenhagen. She continued to write to her parents and brother in Vienna. They corresponded with postcards, which were more reliable than letters. Rosa and her young brother even wrote to each other. If things got worse, they would say, "The sun didn't shine today…it just didn't shine." In 1941, Mr. and Mrs. Katz wrote that they received notice that they would have to leave Vienna. This was the last postcard Rosa received from her family. Although the Danish people were very kind, she spent her teenage years in intense loneliness.

Life for Rosa in Denmark was fairly quiet until 1943. The Danish underground resistance began blowing up German trains and factories, which fuelled Nazi anti-Semitism. Plans to seize the Jewish population of Denmark leaked to the Danish people, who acted immediately. Rosa moved around to different families in Copenhagen. Sometimes anonymous phone messages warned her that she needed to leave the area. Rosa was 18 years old, she carried no luggage, and she was alone. She knew she had to survive.

One fall day in 1943, a message told Rosa that she needed to go by taxi to a place outside Copenhagen called Espergaerde. The kind and cooperative taxi driver knowingly had her hide under the back seat when they drove past a German soldier camp. That afternoon, she arrived at a house on the coast that belonged to a nurse named Helga. The kitchen and parlor were filled with Jews, waiting to be called to go down to the beach below the house. That night, Rosa's name was called and she was led by a man through the forest to the sea. Across the water, Rosa could see Sweden's lit up cities. It was raining heavily and the beach was full of people, none of whom Rosa knew or recognized. There was only one woman who had luggage, a "roly-poly lady," Rosa remembers. Since this woman looked like she was having trouble carrying her things, Rosa offered to help. Gladly, the lady had Rosa carry her suitcases around behind her. A small fishing boat arrived not much later. When the roly-poly lady's name was called to get on the boat, she insisted that Rosa come with her, even though the man with the list greatly protested. After much arguing, he let Rosa go with the lady. With about 20 other people, crammed under piles of dead fish, the tiny fishing boat carried them across the water to Sweden. The only other boat that left the beach that night was captured by the Germans.

Rosa was welcomed well in Gotenburg. The first thing she and a few of her fellow refugees did was buy chocolate and go see an American movie. They fell asleep in the theater, of course, after their long sleepless night. Rosa stayed at a pension with other young adults, with whom she also attended school for two years, until the war ended in 1945. Rosa met her future husband through a classmate while she was in Sweden. Together they returned to Copenhagen. Rosa hoped and searched for her family through the Red Cross, but no trace was left of her mother, father, and brother. A few distant relatives had escaped to France, where they survived.

Rosa dreamed of returning home to Austria, but found that she simply could not; although a part of her was still Austrian, she no longer belonged there. To her, the Austrian people's betrayal hurt more than that of the Germans. Her own people had turned on her. Although the war was over, Rosa was still confused. She was offered Austrian citizenship again, but declined, preferring to stay in Denmark, where the wonderful Danish people had been so good to her. They had taken her as their own.

Rosa and her husband Werner Cohn lived in Denmark until 1951, when they moved to the United States for seven years. They had a son, Peter, and a daughter, in the meantime. Werner and Rosa moved back to Denmark for a few years so that their children could go to Danish schools. They later returned to the US. Since then, Rosa has enjoyed (and is still enjoying) a beautiful, peaceful life. She has grandchildren to be proud of.

Rosa had lost much in the Holocaust: her family, her childhood, her home and her friends. But she did not lose her life, and besides that, she also gained so much. In Denmark, Rosa made friends that have lasted a lifetime. She found a new country to call her own. She found the man she would share her life with. Rosa is so very fortunate to have come through it all without so much as going hungry for one day. Rosa survived more than just physically. She has survived in heart; never did she become bitter or hateful. Rosa found the humor in things, and let that carry her out of the night. She could still trust in people; she could still love. And that is where Hitler really lost his battle.

By Barbara Danek

Ruth Novice

Ruth Novice is an extraordinary woman. Born Ruth Anna Minden in Hamburg, Germany on December 29, 1927, she grew up only knowing fear. Her mother Anna raised her, the youngest child, her two sisters Elisabeth and Eva, and her brother Max, while her father Henry, worked as a lawyer. Her extended family lived very close by in Hamburg, and the only friends their family had were Jewish. Her family was very observant of the Jewish religion at the time. They considered themselves to be Orthodox, as they kept kosher and followed the laws of the Sabbath. Ruth went to an all-girls Jewish school, where she received a Jewish, as well as a secular, education until the age of ten and a half.

Ruth was only five years old when Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933. She remembers her family's dinner conversation pertaining to the current political situation. As children, she and her siblings had to be very quiet when outside of their apartment; otherwise, their neighbors could report them, and if the children were older, they could have been arrested. She remembered her mother telling her, "If you see anyone in uniform, get out of the way!" It was very common to see uniformed soldiers as they marched in columns in the streets holding flags and playing music. Soon enough, the manager of the apartment building told the Minden family that they were no longer allowed to use the elevators, even though the family lived on the third floor. They had to be careful about using their radio, because if a neighbor heard a foreign radio station, they could be reported.

When Hitler came to power, Henry Minden started doing legal work for other Jews, helping them escape. With his business he had to travel a lot, and being a British subject he did not have too much trouble crossing the borders out of Germany. However, the Germans did not know he had dual citizenship. One Thursday, the Gestapo ordered Ruth's father to come to their office. He then realized he had to get his family out of Germany. However, due to his dual citizenship, people knew him at the different borders; so he had to devise a plan for their escape.

On Monday night, they had the tickets. They took the money out of two different bank accounts in order to not seem suspicious, and then took more money out of Ruth's bank account, with a plan in mind. If anyone at one of the borders asked, they would simply say they were taking Ruth to boarding school in England.

Only three family members traveled together, Ruth and her parents. Ruth's brother was already in Holland in a Hachshara (training for a kibbutz before going to Palestine). Her, two sisters were living in residence halls while going through another training program. They escaped later.

Ruth's father chose to exit via the Belgian border because the guards there were least familiar with him. On the train, Ruth remembered trying to act very cool, but inside feeling

very scared. Throughout the Hitler years Ruth feared that someone was looking over her shoulder and that fear continued during her escape. For the period of their escape, keeping kosher was very difficult but not impossible for her family. The Mindens stayed in Belgium for about two or three days, and then traveled to Amsterdam. It was in Amsterdam that she suddenly realized no one "looked over her shoulder" anymore. The family remained in Holland for six weeks, until they finally reached London on December 19, 1938.

In England Ruth was relieved that she was allowed to go into the streets by herself. However, on September 3, 1939, Germany declared war on England. There was a blitz (war from the air), and in 1940 the Germans started bombing London. This was a different fear altogether for Ruth. She now had to hide in shelters, listen for sirens warning of air attacks day and night, and was scared to go out in the mornings.

When Britain and France allied, the French soon lost their war against Germany. At that point the Germans decided that England would be the next target and might have been successful, except that at a certain point, Hitler decided to try to conquer Paris first. At that time Ruth began to fear the Germans might catch up with her, perhaps psychologically the lowest part of the whole war for her.

It turns out that the change in tactics of the German army gave the British an opportunity to rescue the British Expeditionary Force, the British part of the army that had been fighting in France. They had to cross the English Channel, a stormy channel of water at most times, especially at that time of the year. However, during the two or three days of rescue the waters were like glass, allowing even the smallest vessels to cross safely from the French coast to the English with their precious cargo of human lives. Ruth, only eleven years at the time, felt enormous relief when it became clear that the Germans would not invade England at that time.

During the war in England, her family planted a victory garden, where they had to grow some of their own vegetables. Ruth lived in England and met her husband Michael Novice, also a Holocaust survivor, in 1949 and they married five years later. The two lived there until 1964. They then moved to the United States and developed a wonderful life there together.

By Anna Miller

Saul Golan

The story of Saul Golan is a story of struggle and a young man's will to survive and use his mental and physical strength to elude the Nazis.

Saul Golenbiowski was born in Radom, Poland, a city of 90,000 people, 60 miles south of Warsaw. His father, Alter-Yerachmiel, was a leather merchant who manufactured shoes. His mother, Esther-Rivka, was a homemaker who also assisted the management of her husband's business. Both were active in the Zionist movement. Saul and his younger sister, Hela, grew up in a very progressive, traditional Jewish environment. The family kept kosher and Saul had a bar mitzvah. He attended a private school called Tarbut, (which means "culture" in Hebrew) similar to Kehillah Jewish High School, while Hela, went to a Polish public school. Saul is the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust.

Although one third of Radom's population was Jewish, Saul remembers it to be "an environment of hate and Polish anti-Semitism." He recalled an incident that occurred in March 1936 in Przytyk, about four miles from Radom. A mob of bloodthirsty Polish peasants destroyed hundreds of Jewish shops, killed three Jews and beat and wounded scores of others. The events in Przytyk shocked the entire Jewish population of Poland. The anti-Jewish hate even spread to the universities where Jewish students were forced to sit separately from the Poles, "forming a ghetto in the classrooms of higher learning."

Poland was Hitler's "first victim" when the German army invaded on Friday, September 1, 1939. Saul was 17 years old. On the sixth day of the war, the German air force dropped two bombs on Radom. One hit Saul's yard, causing heavy damage to Saul's and the neighboring houses. The second bomb hit a neighboring housing complex and killed 32 people. Fortunately, at the time of the bombing, Saul and his father were chopping wood, approximately 100 yards from the first explosion, and his mother and sister were shopping for food. All were miraculously spared.

"Life was not the same" after the bombing, Saul recalls. People panicked, running and swarming the roads seeking refuge from the terror. The following day the German army caught up with Saul. They took him from his family and brought him back to Radom where he was confined, with thousands of other refugees, to be selected for forced labor. A keen observer, Saul understood the selection process and grabbed the opportunity to sneak into a group of people who were supposed to be freed.

Saul's family eventually came back to Radom. Saul saw the Nazis beat, brutalize and murder Jews everyday, and vividly remembers the sound the wagon wheels made on the cobblestone streets as they hauled the dead bodies away. The Nazis forced Saul to watch, powerless, as they brutally beat and kicked his father. "This was a prelude and a message

for the Jewish people, what to expect from the Nazi perpetrator. The topic of the day was resignation of hope, facing despair with a grim reality," Saul remembers. One of his father's friends, Chayim Gurfinkel told Saul, "What's the use, we won't survive anyway. If you survive, visit my grave at a later time and say, 'Hi friend, we won the war!'" But there is no graveyard for Saul to visit.

Saul and his father were placed in a group of Jews used for forced labor. Saul's father worked in a factory where bicycles were manufactured. Saul worked for a different company that made components for barracks for the German air force. He did this for two or three years in several different villages, sometimes near Radom, sometimes far from home. One such village was Blotnitza. At night, Saul and his work group of ten people were confined to a barracks where they spent their evenings picking the lice out of their clothes. When one of the members of Saul's group, Ulek Przednowek, went out one night, two policemen caught him, took him to the forest and shot him. Saul and his group were ordered to take shovels to the forest, search the warm corpse and dig a grave.

On August 17-18, 1942, the Nazi Special Commando surrounded the Radom Ghetto and forced all the Jews, including Saul's beloved mother, younger sister and other relatives to abandon their homes, while Saul was away at work. He learned from his factory foreman that the panic-stricken people were marched to the railroad station where they were herded onto rail cars packed like cattle, bound for the death camp Treblinka.

In 1943 the Final Solution began. Saul's camp in Blotnitza was liquidated and the Nazis took him to work in the village of Wolanow, three or four miles from Radom. This place was converted into a "killing place." An epidemic of typhoid fever was raging and people were dying. Saul contracted typhoid fever too. He lost a lot of weight and became very weak. A lot of people lost their teeth and hair. He was sick for ten days with no medical treatment and little to eat or drink, but he recovered. The Nazis then liquidated this camp and brought Saul to Szkolna, on the outskirts of Radom, where his father was still working at forced labor.

In January 1944, an SS commander from Auschwitz took over Szkolna and converted it to a concentration camp. Saul was given a number and a red and yellow Star of David (red for communist, yellow for Jew) that were attached to his striped prison uniform. His head was shaven. Saul was there during the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, and Russian soldiers started coming from the east. Saul saw that the German army was beginning to retreat. He and his fellow inmates thought that in 2 or 3 days they would be free. But the situation lasted for another month, and then the Nazis decided to liquidate the camp.

On July 26, 1944 the SS took roll call and called for volunteers. Normally volunteers were taken to the woods and shot. But this time, Saul thought, would be different. He volunteered and was taken back to the factory a quarter of a mile from the camp. He and

his partner, Tuchman, immediately began to look for a hiding place. At the end of the day they hid in a dropped ceiling, which was both a good hiding place and a good observation point. When the workers were supposed to return to the camp, Saul and Tuchman were missed. From their vantage point in the rafters they saw two armed SS soldiers with dogs hunting for them. Miraculously the SS and dogs left.

Saul and Tuchman stayed overnight. The following morning he saw that Szkolna was abandoned. He later learned that the 3000 inmates, including his father, were forced on a march to Tomaszow. Saul's father ended up in Dachau where he was cremated in April 1945.

Saul exchanged his prisoner's garb for coveralls, and left the factory that night, crawling through barbed wire. He hid in Radom's Jewish cemetery, where he found other Jews. By day they wandered to different villages looking for food. At night he hid in a camoflagued bunker he built in the forest. He hoped to head toward the Russian front. At one point some Poles almost turned him in to the German police for a reward, but a righteous gentile stopped them and allowed Saul to flee. Then he ran into the forest, but his freedom was short lived.

Two German field gendarmes spotted Saul with a small group of Polish peasants and took them to a work camp on the front line. The Germans lined up all the workers and started barking orders at the group. When they realized that no one knew what they were saying, they demanded anyone who spoke German should step forward. At first no one did, but then Saul stepped forward and replied in German, "What can I do for you sir?" The second he opened his mouth all of the peasants began to call him "dirty Jew."

Saul then became an interpreter and foreman between the Germans and Poles. For the next few months Saul instructed the Poles to build bunkers and fortifications on the German Russian frontline at the Vistula River. Golan's strength and compassion earned him respect from the German soldiers. Golan recalls how the soldiers would tell him their troubles at home and vent their frustrations with Hitler and with the war.

At the end of 1944, artillery fire by the Russians intensified. The war was drawing to an end, and the Germans were ordered to liquidate Golan's camp and transport all the Poles to Germany. On the night of January 8, 1945 the Germans rounded up all the Poles including Golan for transport to Germany. During the march to the train station Golan approached one of the soldiers to whom he had given vodka, and asked the solider to help him escape. The solider grabbed Golan's arm and told Golan to get lost. Golan ran off into the night. Golan recalls, "It was hard to believe. I was alone in the dark in the middle of nowhere. I waited until the next day to find a village and warm shelter."

Saul Golan's life did not get any less exciting after the German soldier set him free. He

received help from a group of Russian partisans who connected him with the Jewish Brigade that helped him sneak into Palestine. Golan recalls crossing the Alps from Austria to Italy. Golan then caught a fishing boat which was filled with 173 youngsters. They crossed the Mediterranean in 13 days and finally reached the shores of Netanya-Hardea undetected by the British blockade.

When he arrived in Palestine he reunited with some of his family's old Zionist friends who had emigrated earlier. He already knew Hebrew from his years in the private Jewish school in Radom. It was a time of violence, with killings of British soldiers in Tel Aviv. Saul then moved to Haifa in 1947 where he worked for the customhouse as an agent for his uncle. In November of 1947, the United Nations voted for partition and Arab violence erupted. Saul then joined the Hagganah.

On May 15, 1948 Israel became an independent Jewish state. Saul then joined the Israeli armed forces. Saul's unit was named the Golani Brigade. His unit served on the northern front and played a key part in a many battles during the War of Independence. Saul moved to America in 1957 where he opened his own business manufacturing fixtures and cabinets in Redwood City, and changed his last name to Golan. He got married and has two daughters and two grandchildren.

By Jacob Fine and Elliot Fine

Tamar Jacobs

Tamar Jacobs was born in Munich Germany in 1928 where her parents had met and raised their only child. Her father, Dr. Harry (Heinrich) Auerbach, published books of literary and art value, but the business was unprofitable. He came from an orthodox family but got turned off by the severe practice of the rituals. Although her parents themselves were not wealthy, her grandfathers were each millionaires who helped support the family. Her mother's father, Dr. Eduard Aronsohn was a well-known physician and a philanthropist in Bad Ems, Germany. He founded a home for teachers and scholars and an orphanage there.

In 1932 her father was expelled from Germany by the Minister of Propaganda and forced to leave his family. He worked for the League of Nations in Switzerland as a freelance journalist. Tamar moved with her mother, Renette Auerbach, to Cologne, Germany, where she attended a Jewish school. The living conditions drastically changed as they moved from a life of luxury in Munich to a life of sustenance in Cologne. During her childhood, anti-Semitism caused her to be disconnected from other children. Her best friends were her 18 dolls, which she played with every day.

In Cologne, the German neighbors and children constantly tormented Tamar. At her first swim lesson in 1934, Tamar was thrown into the water with only a chord around her waist, which kept her from drowning. The instructor was disrespectful of and did not care for Tamar because she was Jewish. The next week, she came back for her second lesson to see a sign that stated, "Jews not desired!" Because she was only six years old, Tamar did not fully understand why Jews were treated this way. A three-year-old German boy named Haenschen, who lived in the next building, threw rocks at Tamar, hit her with a tree branch and called her a "dirty Jew" every time he saw her outside her apartment. His parents belonged to the Nazi party and brainwashed him to treat Tamar like dirt. Tamar feared that all Germans would treat her as inhumanely as Haenschen.

At the age of six and a half, Renette sent Tamar to a boarding school in Switzerland for two years to be in a healthier environment. She liked it there very much. When she left to return to Germany, she said goodbye to her father at the train station in Switzerland, unaware that this would be the last time she would ever see him.

Tamar's grandfather, Eduard Aronsohn, practiced medicine in Nice, France, in the winter because he suffered from rheumatism in cold Germany. In 1932, while in France and about to return to Germany, he received a letter from the city of Bad Ems, ordering him to stay out of Germany. He had no place to go until a cousin invited him and his wife to come to Palestine.

In the meantime, Tamar was back in the Jewish School. Her childhood was not very pleasant. She had no one to play with. Everything and everyone was very serious. The

grown-ups talked in whispers. There was fear in the air. But, being a child, she didn't understand what this was about. She was told, "We are Jewish, and the other people don't like us. They are allowed to treat us badly."

In September of 1938,Tamar's grandfather from Palestine wrote that lately he hadn't been feeling well. Her mother felt compelled to visit her sick father in Palestine with Tamar because Renette was his only child and Tamar was his only grandchild. Tamar and her mother had to go through many obstacles in order to leave Germany. Suddenly, all of the Jewish passports became invalid and a large, red "J" was placed on them. Their current names also became invalid. All women were forced to be called by the "ugly Jewish name" Sarah, and men were shamefully labeled Israel, unless they paid for another "shameful" Jewish name. Tamar had to beg to get permission from the Administration of Berlin to leave school so that they could finally leave for Palestine. They left on October 8, 1938 for six weeks with one suitcase each.

A month later, on November 9, 1938, while Tamar was in Palestine, the Nazis attacked the Jewish homes in Germany on Kristallnacht, the night of the broken glass. The Germans destroyed her elegant apartment, burned all 3,000 of her father's treasured books, and tore apart everything she and her parents owned. Tamar's mother still wanted to go back to her home in Cologne, but her uncle wrote from Germany and urged her not to be attached to her material possessions, to be glad she had her life, and to stay away. At the time, neither mother nor daughter understood the meaning of that. It was not until years later, when the severity of the German situation became clearer, that it sunk in that her grandfather's expulsions from Germany saved her life. Had Dr. Aronsohn not been forbidden to return to Bad Ems, mother and daughter would have stayed in Germany and their lot would have been the same as the other six million Jews.

Tamar and her mother struggled, mainly economically, to survive. For a while they received a monthly sum of money from Holland, as part of an inheritance, but when the Nazis invaded Holland, that stopped. Tamar went to a Jewish school in Palestine, learned Hebrew and rebuilt her life there. Often, her mother said to her "we have only 100 pound sterling left. I don't know what we will do after that." Tamar used to worry. But somehow they managed. She wore hand-me-down clothes and her uncle's shoes but she was basically happy in Israel. This was her home.

After the birth of the State of Israel, she served in the Israeli Air Force, She fell in love with Zvi, and eventually married. He had studied in a teacher's seminary to become a teacher. They had a son, who died at three months of a rare Jewish genetic disease called Familial Dysautonomia. Then they had a beautiful daughter, Renette, who also sadly died from the same disease at age 32. In time, Tamar realized that Zvi was not the right man for her and they divorced.

On her trip to Holland in 1958, she fell for the love of her life, Alvin, an American born scientist who lived in Brooklyn, NY. They exchanged vows the next year, and maintained their new home in Israel. Tamar taught at the Jewish school that she attended as a child,

while Alvin worked at the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission. Because Alvin had a difficult time adjusting to the Israeli way of life, they moved to the United States two years later.

Tamar worked as a Hebrew school teacher and Alvin did scientific research for some large companies. They had two lovely daughters. Presently, Tamar lives in San Jose, CA and works as a psychotherapist for people all over the Bay Area. She is an active member of the Jewish community at Congregation Beth David. Alvin passed away last year, but will always live on in her heart.

A few years ago, Tamar revisited her past life in Germany to remember the pain and suffering of her and her people. As she retells the story of her life, she carries the wounds, but also a glowing pride because she has gone through so much, yet made it so far.

By Ilana Nankin

Werner Barasch

I had no idea when I was assigned to interview Mr. Werner Barasch that I would take note of a very interesting story. Mr. Barasch lives in a small cabin on a flat area in the Santa Cruz range. His driveway is off of a parking lot along the Santa Cruz highway, making it difficult for anyone to meet him especially for the first time. His living room has a glass pane so that he always has a view of the valley behind the house. He designed the house and has been living in it since 1962. It might be difficult to maintain, but this is what he wants, and even at over 80 years of age he has the strength to maintain the grounds and take care of himself.

I was surprised to learn that most of my questions were already answered. I had brought with me a preliminary set of them, so Mr. Barasch gladly gave me English and German copies of his book, SURVIVOR: Autobiographical Fragments 1938-1946. He has a stack of them from the German publishing company. Though his book is educational material in German schools, in the United States it is not available. While the German publisher lacks a foreign distributor, the American companies want full publishing rights, an offer Mr. Barasch cannot accept. Thus, I am fortunate to have his book on my desk.

Werner stressed two points at the start and end of the interview. First was his method of handling the goons who pursued him and took him prisoner. “You are courteous to them,” he said, “you sympathize with them. You do not make a confrontation. I kept quiet and said ‘yes sir. Of course I’ll stay’… Everybody else did the contrary and did not get out alive. Part of it is my nature. I’m not very confrontational.” Secondly, he noted that when he was in a Jewish Boy Scout troop in Germany, he learned from his scoutmaster, “A good boy scout does not know the word impossible.” As Werner further noted, “That gave me a philosophy on life. I don’t know that word, period. This is another thing I stress in my talks.” As a member of the Boy Scouts of America, I am intrigued that the principles he learned as a Boy Scout were integral in surviving the war and reaching America.

Not all the surprises were pleasing. Werner Barasch is not a religious man. He is a Jew by blood and culture, but his father did not wish to force his two children into one religion — “You pick your own,” Werner said of his father’s opinion. As a young boy in Berlin, Werner was exposed to multiple religions and sects. Elaborating on the question of religious observance, Werner noted, “Of course I feel Jewish, but as far as practicing, I decided that none were getting me anywhere, and so my religion is pretty much music. Music for me is everything. Many people do need religion and the theatrics, and I respect that.” He has a piano in the living room closer to the glass pane than the television set. Furthermore, I expected that, as a survivor of the Holocaust, Mr. Barasch was involved in a Nazi containment area, whether it be a ghetto, a concentration camp, or a death camp. Though Werner was imprisoned in multiple camps and had escaped from most of them (as he showed me on a map in the book), none of the camps were German. During his wait for an American visa, he traveled to Italy, Switzerland, France, and Spain.

Before Hitler's rise to power, Jews were functional members of Jewish society; as Werner put it, "to be Jewish in pre-Hitler Germany was incidental." Werner's father was an established owner of a chain of department stores. As Hitler's power grew, goons would come to Werner's father's offices and tell him what to do or resign. The Barasch family understood that they could not survive as a Jewish family in Germany. Werner's mother and older sister eventually made it to America; until Werner arrived there himself, he would not see his family. Werner's father stayed home determined that his status as a wealthy businessman and decorated German soldier would outlast Hitler's reign. He was "terminated under color of law in the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen," according to the book. Werner first left to a boarding school in Italy.

Eventually Werner had to leave the country. In 1938, Hitler marched his troops to Italy to "visit" Mussolini. All Jews were to be arrested, so Werner boarded a train to Switzerland. When Werner had his German passport checked, he realized that the police officer was Italian. The officer attempted to speak in German, but he said "his religion" instead of "your religion" in an Italian accent. "Everyone that said Jewish got off the train. I said Catholic. My heart was pounding, but I had to." Werner even declared himself an officer because it was rumored that they would be treated better. The rumor turned out to be false.

His stay in Switzerland became very important later when trying to reach America. Switzerland had German, Italian, and French regions. The German Swiss had a very orderly police force. When the German Swiss gave Werner a document of extradition, Werner contacted his cousin, whose lawyer recommended that Werner go to Geneva, the French part of Switzerland. The French Swiss police were open to bargaining. In Geneva, Werner could stay until summer vacation, when he left Switzerland for France and never came back, legally.

When the war broke out, Werner was locked up for being a German citizen. In Paris he tried to escape capture, but he was apprehended in a hotel room in Tours. After that, he was transferred between different camps. When Hitler's army overran France, the prisoners as well as the soldiers had to evacuate. The evacuation train stopped for the night in an open area. The next morning, as the barbed wire fence was being rolled out, since the French were trying to maintain possession of prisoners of war like him, Werner escaped. After being captured and escaping again, he traveled over the Spanish border, was arrested, imprisoned and, after 3 months, was put into another concentration camp.

Spain was definitely not a great spot to be during the war. Under Franco, one out of three Spain citizens was in prison. In the end, when Franco decided to end his relationship with Hitler, most prisoners, including Werner, were gradually released on parole. He then had to surmount another challenge, passage to America.

He had first applied for a visa in 1938, but he could not get it for seven years because of the American quota system. Between escapes from various countries of Europe, he had his files transferred to several responsible American consulates. Each time, the consulates would make excuses for not issuing the visa. His mother in America tried to help, but

her efforts failed as well. The American consulate in Spain, despite documentation and requests that should have been in his files, for 2 years just did not acknowledge where Werner had been. He claimed that he had escaped from masses of people who were all killed. They considered Werner a liar but never told him directly. After he was able to furnish a document of his extradition from Switzerland to France, his story was accepted and he was no longer considered a liar; Werner made it to the United States of America in 1945!

Several weeks have passed since I have seen Werner Barasch, the man who lives alone in a cabin off a road diverging from the Santa Cruz highway. He is an incredibly strong man mentally and spiritually. His story is a testament of determination to survive when everyone was planning to kill him, and I hope the fragments of the tale of his survival will last for generations to come.

By Simon Linder

Werner Cohn

Werner Cohn was born in the town of Chemnitz, Germany in 1922 to a family that was Jewish by heritage alone. Werner and his family, which consisted of two divorced parents, two step parents, and a brother, celebrated Christmas every year. His first time in a synagogue was at his brother's Bar Mitzvah at the age of twelve. Werner was always a top student in his class, and teachers and friends always liked him for who he was. All of that changed on the 30th of January 1933.

School life for Werner changed drastically since that day when Hitler took power. Teachers, who knew he was a good student, dropped his grades for illegitimate reasons, and took him out of religion classes. They forced him and other students to watch propagandist movies of the poor Germans who suffered during and after World War I and promised that Hitler was going to show the road to freedom. Friends, who knew he was a good person, began shying away. The non-Jewish kids were brought into a group called Hitler Youth, and the Jewish kids like Werner were forced to create an equivalent called German-Jewish Youth. That is how religion first impacted Werner in his life.

In 1934, Werner's father remarried a Danish girl who had seen the things going on in the rest of the world and strongly insisted that he and his brother move out of Germany. In 1936, at the age of thirteen, he moved to Denmark where he found a second home. Without having ever learned a single word of Danish in his life, he perfected the language in six months. His father, however, decided to stay in Germany.

Although times were tough for the Jews, Werner's father figured that Hitler's Nazis would not do him any harm because he had served as a German soldier in World War I and was a manufacturer of woven gloves and stockings, which he exported to Scandinavia. He stayed in Germany with his wife and Werner still visited him there every summer, but Werner's brother moved to live and study in Paris. Deciding to visit his son there, Werner's father obtained a visa on the 9th of October 1938. One month later, on the 8th of November and a day before his visa expired, he got on a train to Paris. On November 9, 1938, Jewish people were arrested all across Germany in a tragedy known as the 'Crystal Night' today. Every Jew was arrested, but when they came for Werner's father, he was already on his way to Paris.

With his business confiscated and wanted by the German government, Werner's father was able to settle in Norway, where he had many friends and lots of influence due to his past export business. He bought a house outside Oslo and was able to get his brother and sister-in-law out of Germany and help them settle in Norway. World War II started in 1939 and in 1940 Hitler's army occupied both Denmark and Norway. In 1942, he got a call from his brother who told him the Norwegian SS had come to arrest him and his wife. They were taken back to Germany where they died in a concentration camp. Werner's father went to hide at a friend's house to save himself. Nobody ever came for him. After the war had

ended, his father discovered that a passing acquaintance from before the war had moved to Norway as part of the German occupation forces. The man recognized Werner's father's name on the list of Jews to be arrested and saved his life with the stroke of a pen. The brother, whom the acquaintance did not know, was not so lucky. Werner's father and his Danish wife later fled to Sweden, where they remained until the end of the war.

Werner's mother had two sisters, both of whom were sent to concentration camps and didn't survive. Their mother committed suicide through poison when the Nazis came to her apartment to arrest her. Werner's mother was the only one to survive. She fled to France before the war, but after the war started, was put in a camp by the French. She was later released due to the influence of her new husband. However, that influence didn't help very much when the Germans invaded France and began searching for him and his family. Moving to the border of France and Spain to hide, they waited until Werner's brother, mother and step-father were given a visa to move to the United States, where they stayed for the rest of the war.

While his father and mother were busy fleeing across France and Scandinavia, Werner had remained in Denmark. In the fall of 1943, Hitler decided to arrest all the Jews in Denmark. A leader of the Danish underground called Werner and gave him two hours to pack his stuff and get to Sweden by a fishing boat. Less than three hours later, the Germans knocked on his door to arrest him, but he was already on his way to Sweden. More than 5000 Danish Jews were able to flee to Sweden within those few nights.

Taking a job as a math teacher in a Danish school, Werner stayed in Sweden until 1945 when he returned to Denmark. He studied engineering and he got his degree in 1949, before serving a year in the Danish navy. A year later, in 1951, he married Rosa and still lives a happy life with her today. They have two children and four grandchildren, all living in the U.S.

I have grown up with the Holocaust all my life, whether it was by my family or by my religion. I was always taught facts and dates, numbers and names, and just about every other aspect that can turn any tragedy to a mere entry in our history books. I have never taken it for granted, but neither has it ever felt as real as when I sat down with Werner and listened to his amazing story of luck and survival. It always pains me to see those who have been scarred by such a horrible time in our lives, but deeper inside I always see a passion that says, "We're still alive and Hitler is not." It is people like Werner and the countless stories that have yet to be told that truly fill me with hope; and what really matters is that we are still here.

By Amit Deutsch

Wolfgang Schaechter

Wolfgang Schaechter was born in the Romanian town of Iasi in the year 1935. He is an only child. His parents, Alexander and Frizi married in 1929 and wound up in Iasi, where his father worked in a textile factory as the chief engineer and factory manager.

In June 1940, when Wolfgang was only five years old, the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum to Romania demanding the return of Bessarabia (where Cernovitz was located). His friends who worked as city officials under the fascist regime, advised/warned Wolfgang's father to move as soon as possible because they foresaw what would happen to the Jews, as the fascist party was becoming increasingly active. The family therefore moved to Cernovitz in 1940 in an effort to free themselves from Romania's fascist government. There his family was fortunate enough to live in a place that was under the control of the Russians who weren't murdering Jews. Shortly after Wolfgang's family arrived there, his father left for Kiev to work as an engineer in Asia Minor. He and his mother lived with his grandfather in a cooperative apartment and lived off his grandfather's tailoring income and personal savings.

When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, the anti-Semitism greatly increased, and Wolfgang was forced to live in a ghetto. This time was associated with a lot of fear, which emanated from his mother and other relatives who were beset by uncertainty of their lives. Fortunately the time Wolfgang spent in the ghetto was short, acting only as a transition period before moving back to his grandfather's apartment. While Wolfgang was growing up in Cernovitz, the Jewish community kept a low profile, in an effort to avoid persecution. Although, he was forced to wear a Jewish star when he walked outdoors he was not subjected to a lot of other anti-Semitism. He believes this was due to the fact that he did not have the stereotypical look of a Jew (curly hair and a large nose) that was commonly portrayed by the Nazis.

Wolfgang's father had retreated with Russia's industry to Tashkent in Asia Minor as the Germans pushed into Russia. He returned to the family on the day of Yom Kippur in 1944. The whole family stayed in Cernovitz until late September of 1945, at which time they immigrated in the post-war chaos to Poland as a part of Russia's national resettlement program, to get out of war-torn Europe to America. Wolfgang later moved with his whole extended family to a displaced persons camp in Vienna. From Cernovitz to Poland his family spent weeks in freight cars packed with two families per car moving at a snail's pace until they reached their temporary destination in Poland. From Cracow, they traveled through Czechoslovakia to Vienna. His family only spent a short time there, and then moved to a transient camp in Enns in 1946.

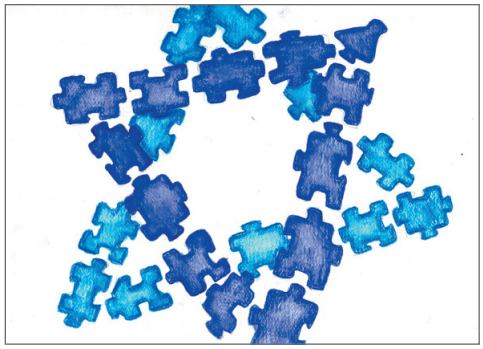
Wolfgang's father quickly became the chief engineer and played a large role on the camp staff, which was run by the U.S. army and was very crowded because of the surging number of refugees. It was in Enns that Wolfgang began to study for his bar mitzvah. In the fall of 1948 the camp in Enns was closed and Wolfgang was forced to go to the displaced persons camp in Salzburg. He left there for Munich in October of 1948 where he had his bar mitzvah. The bar mitzvah was as brief as his passage; it merely consisted of a minyan and a Torah reading. Wolfgang and his family later arrived at his embarkation camp in Bremen where they were supposed to embark on an immigrant ship to the USA. They had intended to board a boat to America very quickly but a dockworkers strike pushed back the departure another two months, to December.

Wolfgang finally arrived in New York on December 16,1948 and rebuilt his life along with the rest of his family. However his extended family wasn't so lucky. His uncle's family and his mother's side of the family were all murdered in Romania and Poland. In the USA, his father spent time as a manual laborer building shop displays and manufacturing radio chassis. It wasn't until 1949 that he found a job in a technical field doing drafting work. Later, in 1952, he embarked on the rest of his career design-engineering piping systems. Wolfgang went to college in New York and California and followed in his father's footsteps as an engineer. He moved California in 1975 with his wife and their two children.

By Ben Cohen

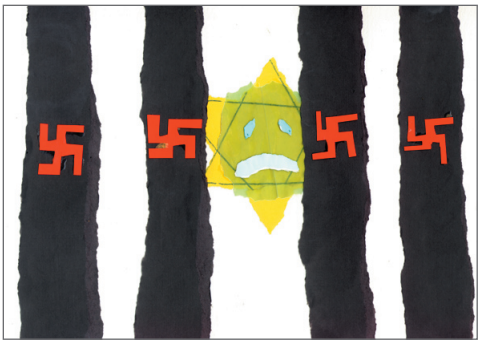
Back Cover Holocaust Remembrance Inspired Art

Created by “Generation to Generation” Class, Congregation Beth David Hebrew High School.
These students also performed the interviews of the Holocaust survivors.

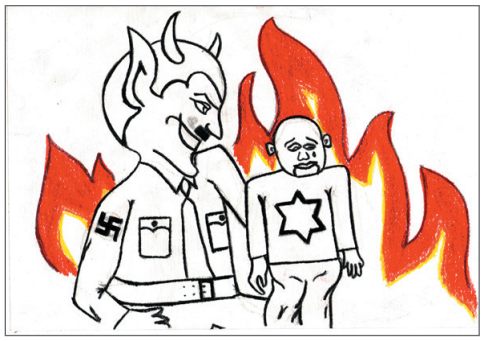


"An Unsolved Puzzle" by Ilana Nankin

"Broken Candles" by Barbara Danek



"Death Behind Bars" by Elliot Fine



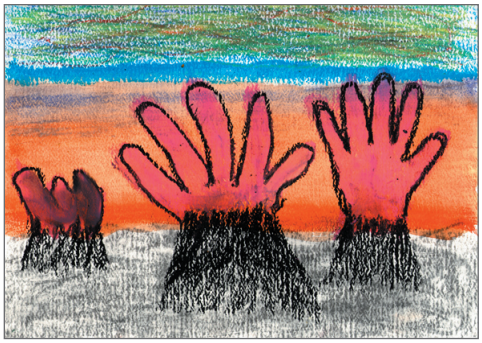
"Face of the Devil" by Ronny Beer

"Love of Life" by Laurie Snow

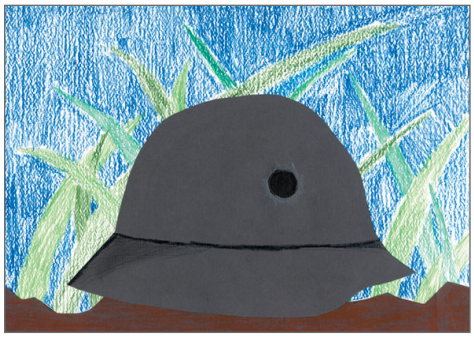
"One Bright Spring Morning" by Craig Adam Kabert

"The legacy of the survivors of the Holocaust must live on through the voices of others in order that this chapter in our history is never forgotten and never allowed to take place again."

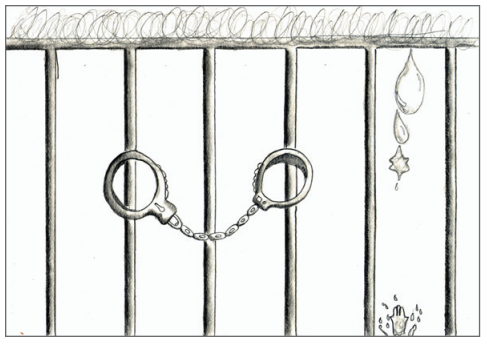
— Rebecca Cohn
Assemblymember, 24th District



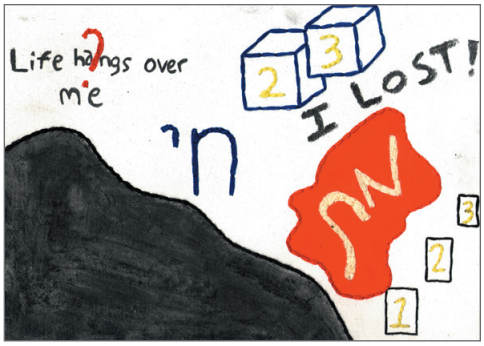
"Reaching For Your Faith" by Amit Deutsch



"Relic" by Adam Cole

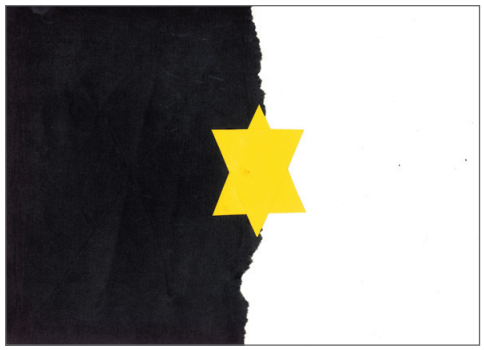


"Strength Through Injustice" by Ben Cohen

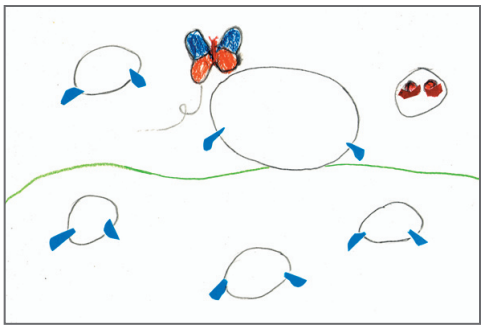


"The Gamble" by Hannah Osofsky

"The Last Hope" by
Danna Rubin & Tali Wolf

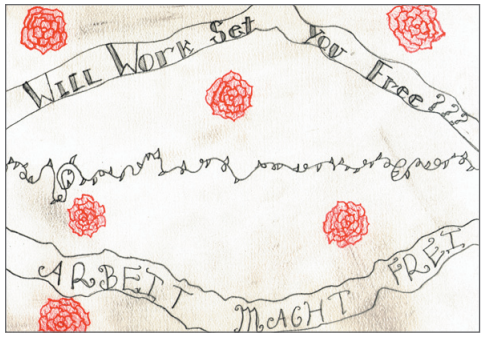


"Torn" by Jacob Fine



"Until You Can Cry No Longer" by
Alex Bernstein

"Trapped" by Marni Swedroe



"Work Will Set You Free" by
Maryana Smolyanitsky